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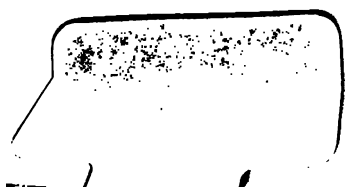
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"O my dove, that art in the Clefts of the Rock."—*Sol. Song ii. 14.*



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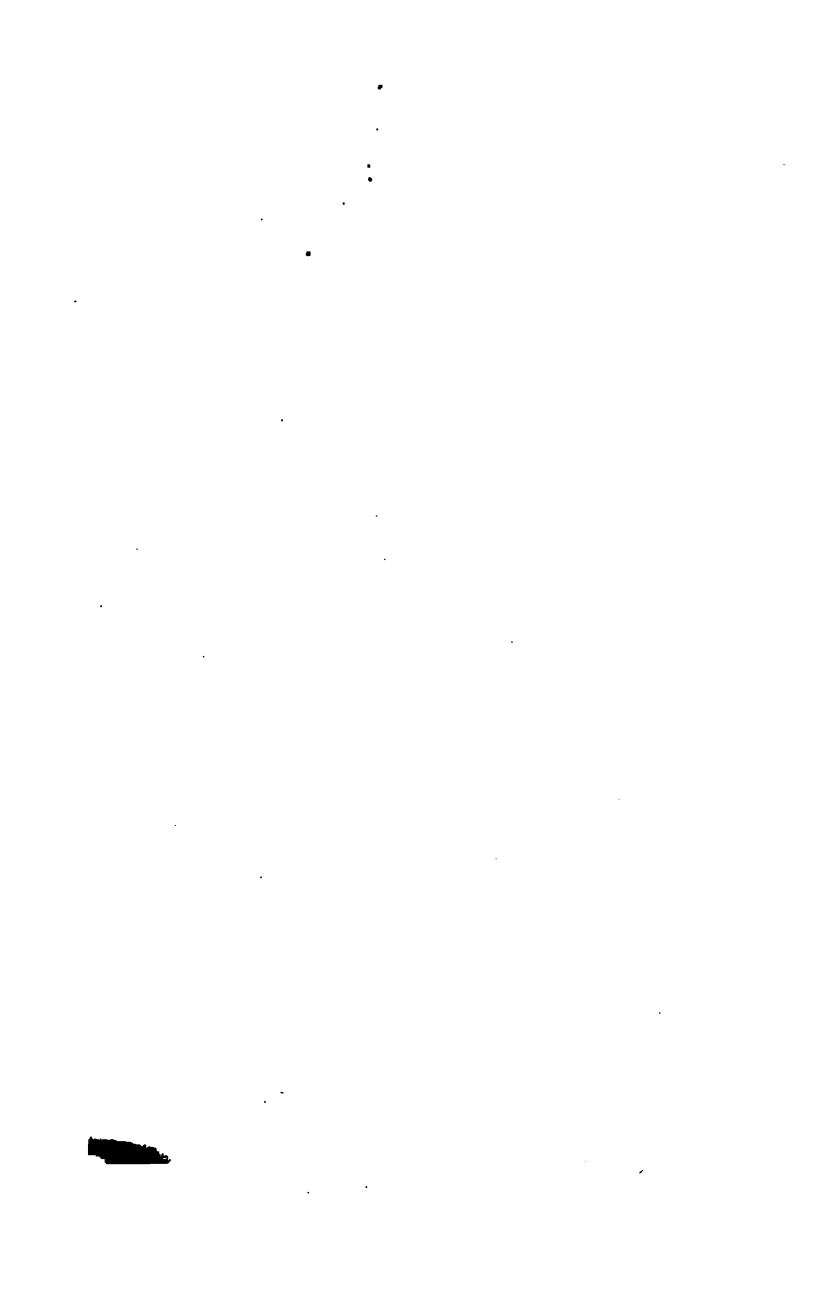
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy ribben side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands:
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone!

Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

While I draw this fleeting breath—
When mine eyelids close in death—
When I soar to worlds unknown—
See Thee on Thy judgment throne—
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!

TOPLADY.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE name of this Volume will best interpret the design of its pages.

They purport, however inadequately, to set forth the leading grounds of safety and security, comfort and peace, which are to be found in the adorable character and completed work of the Divine Redeemer:—"Clefts," to the shelter of which we can repair, alike "in all time of our tribulation and in all time of our wealth,"—in the prospect of "the hour of death and of the Day of judgment." To every believer, the words of Balaam's parable in a nobler sense may be applied, "Strong is thy dwelling-

place, and thou puttest thy nest IN A ROCK :” * or those of the great Prophet, as rendered in the Septuagint translation, “ His place of defence shall be in a lofty cavern (or cleft) of *the strong Rock*.” † It is the complex Person of “ IMMANUEL, ‘ God with us ;’ ”—the might and majesty of Omnipotence in conjunction with the tenderness of humanity,—“ Our God, yet our Brother—our Brother, yet our God,” which makes Him the sure and unassailable Stronghold He is. The ‘ Clefts,’ whither His people are invited to flee, are in a Rock : but, that Rock is “ THE ROCK OF AGES !” Contemplating His Deity, they can utter the Psalmist’s challenge, “ Who is a ROCK save OUR GOD ?” ‡—yet they can add, “ A MAN shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tem-

* Num. xxiv. 21.

† Isa. xxxiii. 16.

‡ Ps. xviii. 31.

pest, . . . as the shadow of *a great rock* in a weary land." *

It was the consciousness of being sheltered in these divine clefts, that enabled the great Apostle to say, in his own name, and in the name of all in every age who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." †

* Isa. xxxii. 2.

† Rom. viii. 35, 37-39.

Tribulation—Distress—Persecution—Famine, and the other adverse forces included in his enumeration, are so many waves dashing against THE ROCK—trying to ‘separate,’—gathering their united strength to sweep from the secure shelter. But in vain. They are beaten back in succession with Faith’s challenge,—the reproof, not of bold overweening presumption, but of lowly believing confidence and heavenly trust—‘In the name of a Mightier, we bid defiance to your might!’ ‘Who shall separate us?’ “I stand upon a Rock,” says Chrysostom, “let the sea rage, the Rock cannot be disturbed.” “My flesh and my heart faileth,” says an older saint, “but God is the *Rock* of my heart and my portion for ever.” *

“It hath pleased the Father that in Him

* Ps. lxxiii. 26. See Hengstenberg’s rendering of this verse.

should all fulness dwell.”* As on the head of Christ, under the emblem of a King, there are represented “many crowns”†—so, under the metaphor of a Rock, there are represented many *clefts*. One Rock, but diversified grounds of confidence and trust; each one uttering a silent response and invitation to the quest of the weary soul—“Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”‡

The emblem of a Rock, as thus applied to the Divine Redeemer, is at once sublime, beautiful, and appropriate;—suggestive as it is of strength, durability, shelter, safety. It speaks of nature’s noblest monumental columns—coeval with creation—fresh as at first sculptured by the great Artificer: older, grander, and more lasting than obelisk or pyramid, or most

* Col. i. 19.

† Rev. xix. 12.

‡ Ps. lv. 6.

colossal work of human power. Over these rocks, have the winds of heaven continually swept. Age after age has the sun discharged upon them his quiver of golden arrows : but resisting all changes—defying all elements—outliving all political convulsions—no wrinkle can be traced on their majestic brow : now in sunny robes of roseate light—now gleaming in the moonbeams with silver mantle—now swathed in white garments of cloud—now curtained in raging tempest—now their echoes awoke with the trumpet of peace—now with the clarion of battle ;—but every hoary peak remaining immutably the same. Such, is “ The Rock of our Salvation ! ”

Each Reader will doubtless have his own associations with the figure ; derived from some memorable scene in nature. The Writer may be forgiven



a personal reference, if he venture to allude to the spot whither his own thoughts invariably revert when the imagery of "THE ROCK OF AGES" is before him. It is in one of those magnificent valleys among the Alps of Piedmont, visited in early youth, sacred to the heroic sufferings and triumphs of the Vaudois. There, a mountain, clothed at the base with varied fruit and forest trees, is crowned with a wonderful rampart of natural rock. *Castelluzzo* is pointed out to this day, by the descendants of the martyred Waldenses, as the place into which, during successive persecutions, when the adjacent valleys were desolated by fire and sword, their fathers often fled with their wives and little ones for safety. All the deeper was the impression made by this singular stronghold, from having been first seen, in descend-

6

ing the Italian side of the wild pass of La Croix, when the whole valley beneath was shrouded in fog. It towered in solitary grandeur above the sea of mist, and seemed, from its height, like an island suspended in mid-air. It has, or rather had, several remarkable peculiarities—as if the God of nature purposely upreared it to be a rampart for His oppressed people. Though of lofty elevation, it was rendered so accessible, that even mothers and their infants, with the aid of stronger hands, could avail themselves of its shelter. It had a cleft or opening on one side, by which alone it could be entered. It contained a spacious cavern, in which, fuel from the adjoining forest was readily stored, and at times corn and wild fruits were garnered from the neighbouring productive slopes : while, in the centre of the cave was a never-failing spring of water,

which, in the hour of peril, completed the necessary supplies of the rocky citadel. The Divine promise was thus more than once literally fulfilled in the case of many noble sufferers for the truth, "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure."* Once within it, the weakest felt secure. A handful of men, stationed at the entrance, by rolling down masses of stone (easily disintegrated from the sides and top of the cavern), could defy the assault of disciplined soldiers.

The loftiness of the Rock—so often seen wreathed in glorious cloud—the cleft—the one cleft—the accessibility—the spaciousness of the cavern—the secure shelter—the "fountain opened"—might well suffice

* Isa. xxxiii. 16.

to suggest mental pictures of a Greater and sublimer reality—"Lead me to THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I!" *

* Ps. lxi. 2. It has been suggested as possible (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 395), regarding the metaphor employed in the first Gospel, where Christ speaks of "the ROCK on which He is to build His Church"—His great spiritual Temple,—that He who so often drew the imagery of His discourses from passing scenes in outer nature (the Sower and the Seed, the Shepherd and the Sheep, the Vine and the Branches) may have borrowed this beautiful symbol from the Rock so familiar still to all travellers in North Palestine, at Baneas, the ancient Cæsarea Philippi, nigh to which undoubtedly our Lord was sojourning when the words were uttered. A magnificent white marble *Temple*, dedicated to Augustus, then crowned this perpendicular limestone cliff; while from a vast grotto or cavern in its face, remaining to this day, there issued, and still issues, a gushing volume of water, one of the sources of the Jordan.

It may not be out of place farther to add, that with a very few exceptions, the early Fathers are unanimous in interpreting the "Rock" of Matt. xvi. 18, either of Christ the True Rock, on whom the Church is built up, or of the Faith in Christ as the Son of God which Peter had professed. The writer of an interesting work on the Roman Catacombs tells us, that in the Apse of the chapel of Paulinus, Bishop of Nola (late in the fourth, or early in the fifth century), our Lord was represented under the figure of a Lamb standing upon a Rock; from which Rock flowed four streams. In a letter of Paulinus, he gives the following lines under a Mosaic picture interpreting the symbol :—

"Regnum et triumphum purpura et palma indicant:
Petram superstat ipse Petra Ecclesiæ :

We shall end these prefatory words with an appropriate anecdote : may its concluding utterances be our own in a similar hour. It is the well-authenticated story of a Highland mother, who, at the close of spring, was suddenly overtaken, in a wild glen among the mountains, by what was long recalled by her fellow-villagers as "the Great May storm." After attempting in vain, for some time, with her infant in her arms, to buffet the whirling eddies, she laid the child down among heather and ferns, in the deep cleft of a rock ; with the brave resolve, if possible, to make her own way home through the driving sleet, and obtain succour for her little one. She was found

*Ex qua sonori quattuor fontes meant,
Evangelistæ, viva Christi flumina."*

"The purple and the palm are signs of royal estate and of triumph. Standing upon a Rock is He who is Himself, the Rock of the Church ; and from this go forth four voiceful streams—Evangelists—the living rivers of Christ."—*See Marriott's "Testimony of the Catacombs," p. 83.*

by the anxious neighbours, next morning, stretched cold and stiff on a snowy shroud. But the cries of the babe directed them to the rock-crevice, where it lay, all unconscious of its danger; and from which it was rescued in safety. Many long years afterwards, that child returned from distant lands—a disabled soldier, covered with honourable wounds. The first Sabbath of his homécoming, on repairing to a city church (where he had the opportunity of worshipping God “after the manner” and in the cherished language of his forefathers), he listened to an aged clergyman unfolding, in Celtic accents, the story of redeeming love. Strange to say, that clergyman happened to be from the same Highland glen where he himself had spent his youth. Stranger still, he was illustrating the Divine tale with the anecdote, to him so familiar, of the widow and her saved child! A few

days afterwards, that Pastor was summoned to visit the deathbed of the old soldier. "I am the son of the widow," were the words which greeted the former, as he stood by the couch of the dying man. . . . "Lay my bones beside hers in the churchyard among the hills. The prayers she used to offer for me have been answered. . . . I have found deliverance in old age where I found it in my childhood—in *the cleft of the Rock*; but it is—THE ROCK OF AGES!"*

* In regard to the subject-matter embraced in these pages: the theme has necessitated, in several of the chapters at least, more of doctrinal treatment than has been usual in other volumes from the same pen. While unswerving in his allegiance to what sometimes receives the disparaging name of "The Old Theology," the Writer, as will be seen (*e.g.*, in Chapter VII., on "Christ as the Manifestation of the Father"), does not by any means undervalue precious views of the character of the Divine Founder of our faith, though he may consider these to have received a too exclusive and disproportionate place in the systems of other modern schools of thought. In reality, however, such views, so far from being antagonistic, will be found, when made to occupy their proper relative position "in the proportion of faith," to be in perfect harmony with other accepted Bible verities.

May He, who of old attested with a voice from Heaven, "This is my Beloved Son," add His own blessing to this feeble attempt to direct the inquirer's eye to these glorious "Clefts;"—to unfold and illustrate the grandest of all revealed truths—"the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh." May the perusal of what follows, enable both reader and writer to subscribe with greater confidence to the Prophet's exhortation:—

"Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is (*marg.*) THE ROCK OF AGES!" (*Isa.* xxvi. 4).

The Deity of Christ.

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM : and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."—*Ex.* iii. 14.

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."—*Ps.* xlv. 6.

"Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."—*Isa.* vi. 5.

"Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—*Micah* v. 2.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM."—*John* viii. 58.

"THE WORD WAS GOD."—*John* i. 1.

"His name is called from of old, Wonderful in counsel, God the Mighty, He who abideth for ever."—*Chaldee Paraphrase on Isa.* vi. 5.

"It has been clearly shown that The Word existed in the beginning with God, and that by Him all things were made ; and that He who had always been present with mankind, was in the last days, according to the time pre-ordained by the Father, united with His creature and became Man, and so capable of suffering : and thus all contradictions of heresies are excluded, which say, if Christ was then born, therefore He did not exist before. For it has been shown that the Son of God did not then begin to be, but was always existing with the Father."—*Irenæus*, 169.

"Let no man go about to entertain the thoughts of the Great Mystery of Godliness, but with a ravished heart. . . . Thou who art a Spirit, and therefore immaterial, invisible, to expose thyself to the view of earthen eyes ; Thou who art an infinite Spirit, to be enwrapped in flesh ; Thou an all-glorious Eternal Spirit, to put on the rags of human mortality ; Thou the great Creator of all things, to become a creature ; Thou the Omnipotent God, to subject Thyself to miserable frailty and infirmity ; O mystery transcending the full apprehension of even glorified souls ! Cease, cease, O human curiosity, and where thou canst not comprehend, wonder and adore."—*Bishop Hall*, 1574.

I.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"THE WORD WAS GOD."

—John i. 1.

SO spake one who had folded his wings, as none other ever did, in "THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK," who, as none other before or since, had obtained response to the invocation of the great Hymn—

"Let me hide myself in Thee!" *

Sheltered in these sublime crevices during three privileged years on earth, overshadowed and canopied, as it were, by that mighty Presence, he could utter the testimony, not as hearsay

* Even to the most gifted minds, there seems to be a marvelous charm in the touching and impressive rendering which Toplady has given to the metaphor selected as the name of this volume. It will be remembered (now years ago) how the Gospel teachings of that Hymn soothed the dying moments of the lamented Prince Consort. And while the first chapter of this

evidence, not as a dry theological dogma, but as a blessed experimental truth, gathered from divine lip and look and heart, during the enjoyment of closest contact and fellowship with his living, loving Lord :—" That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ; (For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."*

The cardinal foundation-truth of all theology thus stated in the prologue alike to the Gospel and the Epistles of the Beloved Disciple, is the supreme Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

work was in preparation for the press, the deathbed of the acutest intellect of the century among the Scottish churches was cheered, at his own request, by the singing of " Rock of Ages." The Hymn was joined in, by a mourning congregation, on the occasion of his funeral sermon.

* 1 John i. 1-3.

Other shelters would be worthless and unavailing without this. Indeed, it is not so much a "Cleft in the Rock," as *THE ROCK* itself, on which the Church of the future, and with it the hopes and aspirations of world-wide humanity, are built. It is the keystone of the arch. Remove it, and the whole superstructure collapses. More than ever, Luther said regarding justification, is it "the doctrine of a standing or a falling church." Take Deity from the tree of life, and its every leaf withers. Take Deity from the Rock, and its majestic places of refuge are turned into sand-clefts; it ceases to be a "Rock of Ages."

It is meet that we should commence themes which in future pages are to engage our thoughts, with what thus gives to that Rock its most glorious and distinctive title. There are special eras in the history of the Church, when truths we have been accustomed to receive with implicit unwavering trust, are either openly assailed, or sought to be shorn of their proportions and strength by the covert negations of a destruc-

tive criticism. Surely of all forms of apostasy and error, that is incomparably the greatest, which would tend in any way, whether by bold assertion or evasive statement, to shake and undermine the believer's faith in the Godhead of his adorable Lord. Doctrinal subjects such as this may not possess the interest of others. We may prefer themes, such as several of those that follow, which come home to the conscience, and stir the affections and the heart. But it is needful, surely, and profitable also, at times to remove the debris,—expose to view the great basement of the Christian temple, and vindicate the peerless dignity of Him who to us as His people, ought to be, and we trust is, “fairer than the children of men.” What more sacred thing is there on earth than to defend the name and honour of a beloved friend? If a parent's worth and goodness were assailed, his honour impugned,—who that has the spirit of a son would not rush to parry the unworthy thrust, and to throw the shield of protection over injured goodness and worth? What shall be said



when the glory of Him is tampered with, who is better than the best and dearest of all earthly relatives? Who dare be dumb, when Arianism and Socinianism are endeavouring to pluck the regal crown from Immanuel's brow, making this very Bible (the mirror of His glory) to reflect unworthy humanitarian views of His official character and Divine Person? If these "foundations be destroyed, what will the righteous do?"

Let us, then, obey the summons of the Prophet, and adopting his words, "go into the clefts of the Rock," to behold the glory of the Redeemer's Majesty.

"What think ye of Christ?"* "Who is this Son of man?"† "All the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"‡ "Is He no more than the first of the shadows of the past—the first of memories—the first of biographies—the most perfect of human ideals? Is He only an ideal after all? Does He reign only in virtue

* Matt. xxii. 42. † John xii. 34. ‡ Matt. xxi. 10.

of a mighty tradition of human thought and feeling in His favour, which creates and supports His imaginary throne? . . . or is He a super-angelic Intelligence, sinless, and invested with judicial and creative powers, but still separated from the inaccessible life of God by that fathomless interval which parts the first of creatures from the Everlasting Creator? . . . Can He save us from our sins? Can He blot out their stains and crush their power? Can He deliver us in our death-agony from the terrors of dissolution, and bid us live with Him in a brighter world for ever? ”* So states an able writer the momentous problem that is now for a little to occupy our attention. Be it our endeavour to approach, with chastened reverential spirit, the sacred oracles, as the great and only court of appeal—the sole arbiter on this as on all other doctrinal questions. With the assent, alike of an enlightened intellect and sanctified heart, may we be prepared to subscribe to the com-

* Canon Liddon's Bampton Lectures, p. 54.

prehensive article first promulgated by the Nicene Fathers, and now for long centuries incorporated in the creed of Christendom :—" I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God : Begotten of His Father before all worlds : *God of God*, LIGHT OF LIGHT, VERY GOD OF VERY GOD ! "

Let us begin by rehearsing a few of our blessed Lord's own declarations regarding His divinity, and then see how these are borne out and supported by the inspired penmen. In other words (although we use the simile with all reverence), let us hear His own divine assertion of claims to supreme dignity, and then summon witness by witness to substantiate these. In doing so, we have to go over ground which has been often previously traversed. Farther, from the necessarily curt and inadequate treatment of which our space admits, we can do little more than quote some of the leading proofs in support of the great doctrine. May He whose special

divine office it is to glorify the Redeemer, take of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto us!

Let us listen, first, to one or two of *the testimonies which Christ Himself gives regarding His Divinity*. We may premise, however, that His own utterances constitute by no means the strength of the argument. On the contrary, while on the one hand He does not shrink from a bold manifesto, or vindication of His divine prerogatives, when the occasion imperatively demands it, there is, at the same time, a marked and peculiar reticence in the assertion of His personal claims. And this itself forms a strong and direct testimony to the cogency of these. So unlike an impostor, who would have taken every opportunity of loudly enforcing his pretensions. "I speak not of Myself." "Believe Me for the works' sake."*

In the 8th chapter of the Gospel of St John,

* John xiv. 10, 11.

Jesus was addressing the Jews in the Temple Treasury, and meeting their virulent cavils and carnal prejudices, as they boasted of their pedigree, and challenged what they deemed His blasphemous assumption of superiority over the great Father and founder of their nation. He makes the distinct announcement, not only of His pre-existence, but of all that was implied in the possession of the Divine incommunicable name of JEHOVAH. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM." Not "I was," but "I AM:—the Great Underived, whose lifetime is Eternity:—that Eternity comprehending a dateless past—a changeless present—a limitless future;—ever living in the sublime consciousness of His own Being. From Everlasting to Everlasting—the same!

Again, at the Feast of dedication in winter, when walking in Solomon's porch, He was interrogated by the same sceptic auditory as to His pretensions. While declaring His preroga-

* John viii. 58.

tive to confer on His sheep the gift of eternal life, He concludes with the assertion, "*I and My Father are one.*"* The Jews present had not misapprehended His meaning. They viewed it as being "either directly or constructively impious." On remonstrating with them for their threat to stone Him, their reply was, "For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that Thou being a man makest Thyself *God.*"† Doubtless He would have disclaimed and corrected their impressions had He considered them erroneous. So far from this, however, He only adds confirmation to His previous testimony. "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father *is in Me, and I in Him.*"‡ "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to

* John x. 30.

† John x. 33.

‡ John x. 37, 38.

whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”* “My Father,” He again says, “worketh hitherto, and I work :” †—anew, explicitly claiming co-ordinate power and parity of working in nature and providence with the Eternal Father. Could there be such an assumption of jurisdiction, identifying and associating Himself as One with the Supreme Maker and Sustainer, “the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary,” if He were not divine ?

If there was any locality or object more than another associated to the Jew with deepest sacredness, it was his Temple. The Temple!—the former abode of the Shekinah, the visible dwelling-place of deity. Hear how the divine Redeemer speaks of Himself in presence of Jews, and under the very shadow of the august fane: “Verily I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the Temple.” ‡

Listen to some of His last divine utterances, when, in the words of the beloved evangelist,

* Matt. xi. 27.

† John v. 17.

‡ Matt. xii. 6.

“knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God :” “I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”* How strange would the assertion have been (on the supposition of mere creatureship), when He speaks of the boon of His indwelling presence, as being of equal value and preciousness with that of the Father! Had the vast interval existed which must always sever the holiest created from the Uncreated, would not His language rather have been this;—‘I, your Lord and Master, will dwell with you; but the boon of *My* indwelling will be nothing to the Greater presence of the Supreme God’? What says He? “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make OUR abode with him.”†

His sublime intercessory prayer is an indirect, but continuous attestation to the same great truth. What striking and remarkable words

* John xiv. 9.

† John xiv. 23.

these were, in connection with the time He uttered them ! They were the words, not of a conqueror, but of, apparently, a doomed man, one about to die. Yet, how the halo of Deity seems to encircle His devoted head, as He speaks : " And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine ownself *with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.*" " All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine ; and I am glorified in them." " Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be *one, as We are.*" " That they all may be one ; as *Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee.*" " I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it ; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."* His works are the works of God ; His will is the will of God ; His glory is the glory of God ; To dishonour the Father is to dishonour Him ; To love the Father is to love Him. " Could we

* John xvii. 5, 10, 11, 21, 26.

have heard Him forgiving sins ; asserting His right to do so, 'even upon earth ;' summoning the world to yield up its heart to Him ; to make its homage to the Father a pattern of its homage to Him ; could we have heard this without feeling that God must be present in the person of the mysterious Speaker ; that the throne of deity must be, in a sense, removed from heaven to earth ? " *

When His work is finished, and He is on the eve of leaving this world, He departs, asserting and claiming the attribute of omnipotence—"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."† When He returns to the beloved disciple in Patmos, as "one like unto the Son of man" in His glorified humanity, He wears the unmistakeable symbols of deity :—"His head and His hairs are white, like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes are as a flame of fire."‡ He rides triumphantly in vision through the heavens, having on His vesture, and on His thigh, a name written,

* *Harris' Great Teacher*, p. 84.

† Matt. xxviii. 18.

‡ Rev. i. 14.

“King of kings, and Lord of lords;”* while these are some of His sublime utterances to the trembling and awestruck worshipper, regarding His omniscience, His eternity, and His power: “These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, ‘I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts.’” “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come—the Almighty.”† And once more, carrying our thoughts onwards, to the consummation of all things—the end of His mediatorial reign over the Church militant;—in one of His most sublime parables, He claims the dignity of Supreme Judge of mankind at the great assize, “When the Son of man shall come in His

* Rev. xix. 16.

† Rev. ii. 23, and i. 8.—“This declaration of Christ concerning Himself, ‘I am the α and the ω ’ (the Alpha and the Omega), was reverently accepted by early Christian art, and is often seen in ancient Christian inscriptions, particularly in the *catacombs* of Rome, where the symbols α and ω are frequently accompanied by the well-known monogram of *Christos*. In one case the symbol is accompanied with the words ES DEIS, probably DEUS, ‘Thou art God,’ asserting the GODHEAD OF CHRIST.”—*Bishop Wordsworth’s Commentary on Revelation*.

glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* To the same effect He declares in St John, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."† "It is not incredible that God should raise the dead; but it is absolutely so that any other Being should."‡

In looking forward to that Day, when the Almighty "shall judge the world in righteousness

* Matt. xxv. 31-34.

† John v. 21-23.

‡ *Dr Pyc Smith*, p. 449.

by that Man whom He hath ordained," do we ever think of what is implied and involved in the complex, superhuman task of being *Judge of all*? It assuredly demands the possession of qualifications centring in *One*, 'to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid;' who, with unchallenged supremacy and discriminating wisdom, which Omniscience alone possesses, can weigh all the thoughts and purposes, the motives and actions, the subtle springs of conduct, the extenuating circumstances in each individual case and life; and that too extending over countless millions of souls—whole centuries thronged with living and accountable beings; none able to resist His might, or to evade His scrutiny. What created power, what angel or archangel from the ranks of loftiest intelligence, could undertake such a judicature as this? Who but the Great Being who sways the sceptre of universal empire:—in other words, JEHOVAH,—could claim and challenge such peerless prerogatives? "Our GOD shall come, and shall not keep silence. . . . He shall

call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.”*

Such are some of the Saviour’s own declarations regarding His Divine claims.

Before proceeding, as proposed, to gather some of the more important attestations of the inspired writers to the great truth, it may be well for a little to advert, from the early place they occupy in Old Testament story, to those indirect but still remarkable testimonies, known as “the Theophanies,” or God-appearances; the anticipatory advents of Messiah to the Patriarchal and Jewish Church, under the title of the “Angel of the Lord,” or “the Angel THE Lord,” the Angel JEHOVAH. “This Person claims an uncontrolled sovereignty over the affairs of men. He has the attribute of omniscience and omnipresence. He performs works which only omnipotence could. He uses awful

* Ps. l. 3, 4.—Bishop Middleton thus renders the apostle’s words in Titus ii. 13, “The glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour.”

formulas, by which the Deity on various occasions condescended to confirm the faith of those to whom the primitive revelations were given: 'He sweareth BY HIMSELF;' His favour is to be sought with the deepest solicitude, as that which is of the highest importance to the interests of men. He is the object of religious invocation. In the most express manner, and repeatedly, declared to be Jehovah."*

The earliest of these "apparitions," or personal manifestations, is recorded in the life of Abraham, when the patriarch was seated at his tent-door in the plains of Mamre. "The Lord" (that is, JEHOVAH, as the Hebrew word means) appeared to him. "He lift up his eyes," we read, "and looked, and lo! three men stood by him; and he bowed himself toward the ground," in customary obeisance. Though in angelic form like the others who accompanied Him, we are left in no doubt as to the superior and pre-

* *Dr Pye Smith, "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah,"* vol. i. p. 303. Perhaps the most exhaustive and scholarly treatise of English theologians on the Divinity of Christ.

eminent dignity of one of these three. Two of the heavenly messengers, after partaking of a patriarchal meal, withdrew on their mission to Sodom. The third, however, tarried with the patriarch. But of Him we read, "And *the Lord* (JEHOVAH) said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" . . . "Abraham stood yet before JEHOVAH." . . . "Behold now," says the Father of the Faithful, "I have taken upon me to speak unto THE LORD, who am but dust and ashes." And again, "Shall not THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH do right?" And then we read, "The Lord (JEHOVAH) went His way."*

We find the same *Angel* appearing to Jacob in a dream, and reminding him thus of the most memorable hour of his earlier history, when in visions of the night, above his stony pillow at Bethel, troops of angels seemed to line a celestial ladder; and a voice, more august and divine than that of angels, addressed the wanderer from the heights of heaven, "I am the GOD of

* Gen. xviii.

Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me.”* At a future crisis-hour, He revealed Himself to the patriarch at Peniel, where “there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” That mighty Wrestler changed the name of the Pilgrim-Father from Jacob to Israel; and He assigned as the reason, “For as a prince hast thou power with GOD and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob called the name of the place *Peniel*, for I have seen GOD face to face, and my life is preserved.”† That incident, with its sacred recollections, years on years afterwards, rose up before the dimming eye of aged Israel, as on his deathbed he summoned Joseph and his two sons to impart to them the farewell blessing. Thus does he advert to that mysterious personage at Jabbok, “GOD, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the GOD which fed me all my life long unto this day, the ANGEL *which redeemed me from*

* Gen. xxxi. 13.

† Gen. xxxii. 24, 28, 29.

all evil."* The Prophet Hosea adds this comment on the same memorable occurrence in the life of Jacob : " By his strength he had power with GOD : yea, he had power over the *Angel*, and prevailed ; he wept, and made supplication unto Him : he found Him in Bethel, and there He spake with us ; even THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS ; The Lord is his memorial."† Observe, this august Being, who first appeared in the gloom of that midnight hour as a *man*, is here designated not even an incarnate angel, but as "*God*," and "THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS."

Passing to the next era in Israel's history. To a careful reader of the whole story of the Exodus, and the wanderings, it will be manifest that the divine Being who preceded the camp, by day in a pillar of cloud and at night in a pillar of fire, was none other than this same Covenant-Angel of the patriarchal Church. Out of the midst of the flaming bush it was the *Angel* JEHOVAH who spake to Moses, and gave

* Gen. xlviii. 16.

† Hos. xii. 4, 5.

him his commission to the court of Pharaoh. That bush was itself a significant symbol of the twofold nature of the promised Redeemer :—not a giant cedar or graceful palm, but a stunted desert tree, “ a root out of a dry ground, having neither form nor comeliness.” Yet glorious as an emblem of Deity :—for “ the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” Moses said, “ I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when THE LORD (JEHOVAH) saw that he turned aside to see, GOD called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon GOD. And THE LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt (for I know their sorrows) ; and I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land.”* But how, it may be asked, are we

* Exod. iii. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8.

authorised to identify the God who spake here to Moses, with the Covenant-Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ? If we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, and read the historical defence of Stephen before the Jewish Sanhedrim, we shall find the protomartyr thus referring to the same incident. "There appeared to Moses, in the wilderness of Sinai, an *Angel of the Lord* in a flame of fire;" and again, "Moses was in the church in the wilderness with *the Angel*, which spake to him in the Mount Sinai." It is plain from these passages, taken in connection, that the living God—the JEHOVAH of the burning bush, and "*the Angel* (of) THE LORD"—are one and the same; moreover, that this Covenant-Angel announces as His purpose not only to deliver Israel, but by His personal guidance to conduct them to Canaan:—"I will bring them up out of that land to a good land." So that all the subsequent manifestations of divine power in that unparalleled march;—the rebuking of the Red Sea, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the final dividing the waters of the Jordan, were the

doings of Him who, in answer to the interrogation of Moses as to the name and authority of their august Deliverer, replied, "And *God* said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. Thus shall ye say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."* Blessed testimony! that the Angel of the pillar-cloud,—the eternal God, who thus declares His ineffable name "I AM";—whose chariots, as described by the Psalmist, were "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels in Sinai, in the holy place;" before whom "the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God, even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, "the God of Israel;" is the very Saviour of whom another thus speaks, in reference to that same great epoch in Israel's history: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the

* What an express confirmation of the same, does the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews give, in his noble roll-call of the champions of faith; when he asserts of Moses that he "esteemed the reproach," not 'of God,' but "of CHRIST" (or rather the reproach for 'the sake of CHRIST') "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." This could be no other than the mysterious Being who had communed with him in the midst of the bush.

Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.*

Our limits forbid tracing, with any minuteness, the references to this Covenant-Angel on other occasions and periods throughout the theocracy. We need only allude, without comment, to the familiar instances of His appearances to Hagar, who named the place where the angel of God called to her out of heaven, "Thou God seest me:"† to Joshua, as "the Captain of the Lord's host:"‡ to Gideon, at his wine-press, when the names "God," and "Angel of God," given to the mysterious visitant, are also significantly interchanged:§ to Manoah, who dreads instant death from seeing "the Angel of the Lord" face to face,—that Angel subse-

* It is worthy of note, in passing, to observe how the name of this God, the God of Israel, the sublime leader of the Hebrew hosts, is interchanged by the apostle for that of *Christ*. In Deut. vi. 16, the words are, "Ye shall not tempt *the Lord your God* as ye tempted Him in Massah." In 1 Cor. x. 9, St Paul thus quotes them, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted."

† Gen. xvi. 13.

‡ Josh. v. 14.

§ Judges vi. 11, 12.

quently revealing his name as "Wonderful" or "Secret:"* to Zechariah, "as presiding over the affairs of the world; directing the ministrations of superior intelligences; protecting, vindicating, and interceding for the oppressed Jewish Church; . . . the Messiah, the Saviour, the Priest upon His throne, the Intercessor;† and not less certainly described as possessing the attributes, exercising the sovereignty, and wearing the holy and incommunicable name of Jehovah."‡ Who else, in these varied cases can this be, but the divine Redeemer forestalling His incarnation;—Jehovah in very deed dwelling with man upon the earth;—a few favoured members of redeemed humanity permitted to entertain, not angels, but the God of angels at unawares?§

But it is time we now hasten to gather a few

* Judges xiii. 18. † Zech. vi. 12, 13. ‡ *Dr Pye Smith, in loc.*

§ "All the circumstances oblige us to regard Him as the true God."—*Michaelis*. "The names *Jehovah* and *Angel of Jehovah* are used interchangeably; the latter signifying that visible symbol under which God allowed Himself to be seen of men."—*Rosenmüller*.

of the more prominent testimonies to the divinity of our Blessed Lord, furnished by the inspired penmen alike of Old and New Testament Scripture.

Among many Old Testament assertions, we may begin with that remarkable passage in the Book of Proverbs, where Incarnate WISDOM is represented as speaking of His own eternal subsistence with the Father; dwelling alone with Him in the yet unpeopled solitudes of Immensity, before throngs of worlds and intelligences had occupied space. Who can read the following sublime passage, and resolve the Divine Being there described, as hostile critics would do, into an Eastern metaphor or poetic impersonation? "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth,



nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there : when He set a compass upon the face of the depth : when He established the clouds above : when He strengthened the fountains of the deep : when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment : when He appointed the foundations of the earth : Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him : and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.”*

Passing to that which is known peculiarly as the ‘ prophetical era,’ let us listen to the strains of the evangelical Prophet. While he speaks, in one sentence (respecting the future Incarnation,) of “ the Child born ” and the “ Son given ; ” he adds, “ His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the *Mighty God*, the *Everlasting Father* ” (margin, ‘ the Father of Eternity ’).† Again, “ Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name IMMANUEL,

* Prov. viii. 22-30.

† Isa. ix. 6.

(which, being interpreted, is *God with us*).^{*} It was this adorable Immanuel—Christ as God—whom the same Prophet beheld in magnificent vision:—"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." He describes the seraphim with veiled wings crying one to another, "'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory,' and the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." And then the awestruck seer is represented as exclaiming, "Woe is me! for I am undone: . . . for mine eyes have seen the *King*, the LORD OF HOSTS."[†] The inference that this "Jehovah of Hosts," to whom the seraphim bend in lowly adoration, is the Lord Jesus Christ, is no gratuitous assumption. Appealing to the Gospels as our authority, we there find the apostle John, after quoting the passage, making the distinct declaration—

^{*} Isa. vii. 14.

[†] Isa. vi. 3.

"These things said Esaias when he saw His (Christ's) glory, and spake of *Him*." *

Listen to the testimony of Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby He shall be called, JEHOVAH *our Righteousness*."† Zechariah, in a verse of sublime but terrific poetry, represents the sword of justice as awaking from its scabbard to "smite the Shepherd." But to that Shepherd is applied the term, 'Equal of the Lord of Hosts,' "the man who is *my Fellow*."‡ Hear the testimony of one of the minor prophets—that most interesting and comprehensive of Old Testament predictions which Micah gives regarding the Person of Christ, embracing alike His divine and human nature. While pointing to Bethlehem-Ephratah as the honoured

* John xii. 41.

† Jer. xxiii. 6.

‡ Zech. xiii. 7.

birth-place of the incarnate Son, in language whose meaning can admit of no doubtful interpretation, he proclaims, in the same breath, His eternal existence: "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—{Marginal reading—"from the days of eternity"}.*

We may close these emphatic attestations with the striking words of Malachi, who seals up the Old Testament vision: "Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me: and JEHOVAH, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in, saith the Lord of Hosts." In this concluding prophecy, the promised Messiah is again brought before us as the Covenant-Angel—the Angel of the old Theophanies; the same divine, mysterious Being who, at the dawn of the Mosaic dispensation,

* Micah v. 2.

announced Himself as the "I AM," "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

We proceed from the Prophecies to the Psalms. Many of these in their literal—most of them in their secondary meaning—refer to Christ :—not a few form an ascription of praise to the Messiah-King in His supreme divinity,—a *Te Deum* to the second Person in the adorable Trinity. To attempt even an enumeration of such would be quite beyond our limits. We must restrict ourselves to three, in which special and undoubted references to the Redeemer are made by writers in the New Testament.

The first of these is the application by the Apostle Paul (in Eph. iv. 8) of a verse in the 68th Psalm : "Wherefore, He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Now, it would be obviously doing violence to all principles of fair interpretation, forcibly to isolate this verse from the preceding and following context, so as to make it stand alone in its reference to Messiah, and regard

the rest of the psalm as alluding to another. If this verse speaks of Christ, it is only reasonable to apply all the other portions to Him. Let us hear, then, the ascription to this same august Being, with which the sublime "*Epinikion*" or "Song of Victory" alike opens and closes. "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered : let them also that hate Him flee before Him." . . . "Sing unto God, sing praises to His name : extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him." . . . "Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ; O sing praises unto the Lord : To Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old : lo, He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God : His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places : the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God."

A second proof, gleaned from the same ample storehouse, is in the Pauline reference to that grand apostrophe which closes the 102d Psalm.

If there be an allusion, as unquestionably there is, in the first instance, to the individual case of the inspired penman (conjectured to be some pious Israelite at the era of the Babylonish captivity, bewailing alike his personal afflictions and those of the Church of God), there is doubtless throughout the psalm a secondary reference to a Greater. We have a foreshadowing alike of the true Humanity and true Deity of the world's coming Redeemer. There is the wail of the suffering Man, in conjunction with the majesty of the everlasting God. In the verse of the psalm immediately preceding the apostle's quotation, we listen to the prayer of the Sufferer, the appeal of the Saviour's sinking human nature to His Father: "He weakened My strength in the way ; He shortened My days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days." The reply of the Father follows. It is the sublime assertion of the supreme Godhead of His divine Son, as the unchanging and everlasting : "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of

the earth ; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment : as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed : but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end."

One other similar proof from the Psalter, is that, for which (in applying it to Christ), we have the express authority of the same apostle in the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is contained in the 45th Psalm ; in which the writer speaks of the things " touching the King ;" and indites, in glowing metaphor, a royal " Epithalamium,"—on the bridal day of Messiah with the Church, His betrothed spouse. While with reference to the humanity of the " mighty One," he speaks of Him as full of benignity, " fairer than the children of men," having " grace poured into His lips ;" he proceeds immediately to celebrate the glories of His deity in language of reverential homage and adoration, " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever !"

At the risk of breaking the continuity of the

subject, we shall reserve the remainder of the proof for next chapter. What has been already advanced, indeed, independent of other testimony, might well lead us to repose in calm confidence in this majestic 'Cleft of the Rock;' and to appropriate with unwavering trust, as alike the foundation article and the crown and consummation of our faith, the opening invocation of the noble Hymn of the ancient church; (are we wrong in saying the grandest uninspired Hymn ever penned ?)—“*Te Deum laudamus* :” “*We praise THEE, GOD!*” *

* The *Te Deum*, in our ordinary rendering of it, is shorn of much of its significancy, as the testimony of the early centuries (probably of the earliest century of all) to the supreme Divinity of Christ. “*Te Deum laudamus*”—“We praise Thee” (not as commonly rendered and sanctioned—“*O God*”—as if addressing the Divine Father), but “We praise Thee, GOD : “We praise Thee, O Christ, as GOD.” Moreover, there are strong grounds to believe that the reference in the middle of the hymn to the three Persons of the blessed Trinity, was an interpolation introduced to adapt its use to the occasion of Augustine's baptism by Ambrose, when we are told it was employed; though the hymn itself, as already noted, was in all likelihood of considerably prior date. If we read it without this alleged interpolation, and on the supposition that it is an ascription of praise to *Christ*, and *Christ alone*, it possesses, in our humble apprehension, a far grander unity and significance than in its ordinary accepted form.

The Deity of Christ.

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."—*Phil.* ii. 5.

"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."—*1 Tim.* iii. 16.

"This is the true God, and eternal life."—*1 John* v. 20.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."—*Acts* ii. 36.

"THE WORD WAS GOD."—*John* i. 1.

"That Christ is the very Lord is manifestly declared, in that Paul attributeth the same things equally unto Him, which he doth unto the Father, viz., divine power, as the giving of grace, the forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, life, victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell . . . Now to give grace, peace, everlasting life, to forgive sins, to make righteous, to quicken, to deliver from death and the devil, are not the works of any creature, but of the Divine Majesty alone. The angels can neither create, nor give these things: therefore these works pertain only to the glory of the Sovereign Majesty—the Maker of all things . . . It must needs follow that Christ is verily and naturally God."—*Luther*.

II.

“This is the confidence that we have in Him”—

“THE WORD WAS GOD.”

—John i. 1.

IN the preceding chapter, a rapid survey has been taken of the more important scripture attestations (and more especially those contained in the Old Testament), to the supreme Godhead of the Redeemer.

We proceed to complete the proof, by referring to a few of the leading assertions of the inspired writers in the *New Testament*, in support of the same cardinal truth of the Christian system. We must refer the reader, who wishes more minutely to prosecute inquiry, to those ampler treatises compiled by masters in Israel, wherein the faith of the Church in the Divinity of her Lord has been nobly vindicated.

To begin with testimonies contained in the Gospels. We shall not attempt to enter on the proof from miracles ; although to these, our blessed Lord Himself pointed, as special attestations to His divine mission. When the Baptist sent some of his own disciples from the prison of Machærus with the query, " Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another ? " what was the Saviour's reply ? With what proofs did He confirm and authenticate His Messiahship in the eyes of these wavering and misgiving followers ? He stretched forth His hands on the surrounding groups stricken with sin and suffering—the palsied with their tottering limbs—the blind with their sealed eyes—the fever-stricken with their burning lips—the demon-possessed with their wild and vacant stare,—“ He healed them all ; ” and then, pointing the messengers to the masses thus restored by His omnipotent touch and word—the closed eye opening to the light of day—the halting cripple leaping with joy—the dull ear of the deaf unstopped—the fevered couch emptied of its tenant—the wild raving

maniac led gently as a child,—“Go,” said He, “Go your way, and tell John what ye have seen and heard.”*

Let us, however, rather restrict ourselves to a few of the direct statements contained in the Gospels and Epistles.

We may begin with another testimony of that same great Forerunner to whom we have just alluded. “John bare witness of Him, and cried saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all.”†

More explicit still is the witness of the other John. When he wrote his Gospel, the venerable Saint of Ephesus was the last survivor of the apostolic band. Well might the eagle, with its strength of wing and soaring flight, be deemed by the early Christians his most appropriate emblem,—reaching, as he did, altitudes attained

* John vii. 22.

† John i. 15; iii. 30, 31.

by no other in the regions of uncreated light and glory, as if basking in the very beams of the unveiled Sun of Righteousness! "Impatient," says Augustine, "of setting his foot on the earth, he rises, from the very first words of his Gospel, not only above earth and the span of air and sky, but above all angels and invisible powers, till he reaches Him by whom all things were made." Surely if there had been no other proof in Scripture, this sublime epitome of the teachings of the favoured apostle (part of which heads this and the former chapter), would of itself suffice to settle the question :—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." What language could be more forcible or conclusive? "This passage," to take one testimony among those of a hundred scholars, "is so clear and so superior to all exception, that by no daring efforts of either commentators or critics can it ever be overturned, or be snatched

out of the hands of the defenders of the truth.”* There is, in these utterances of the beloved Disciple, nothing figurative—nothing parabolic. They consist of a series of simple propositions—the articles of a creed, which John, in an age when heresy was rampant, left as a sacred legacy to the Church of the future as to the supreme divinity of the Incarnate Word—the “Image of the Invisible God.”†

But we cannot linger on the testimonies of the Gospels. Eliminate from these the fact of His absolute Deity, and they become incomprehensible. You try to quench the radiance which beams out on every page. As it has been well said, “Reduce Him to a mere Master like Plato, or a Prophet like Isaiah, and it is as if the Gospels were emptied of their meaning. The very substance of the doctrine is gone : the teaching of Jesus is little more but a tinkling cymbal. All that sublime mystery which has nourished the souls of saints in all time, is then rightly pro-

* *Griesbach.*

† *See Butler's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 333.

nounced the most defective portion of His teaching. If He is not God, the divinest side of His doctrine becomes the most vulnerable. It can only subsist, if beneath the formulas is felt the throb of a life which is truly of God." *

Passing from the Gospels to the Epistles. Although not directly a proof of absolute Godhead, let us begin with St Paul's assertion, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."† "Though rich:"—what could this mean on the supposition that Christ was a mere man? His lowly birth—His manger cradle—the carpenter's home at Nazareth,—all these render the reference surely to His "riches" inappropriate. He was, in earthly condition, the poorest of the poor; a Galilean peasant; who had at times nowhere to lay His head! Moreover, on the supposition of mere manhood, how could there be

* *Pressense's Life of Christ*, p. 883.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

“grace” manifested by Him in assuming our nature? Where would be the condescension in a man taking upon him the common garb of humanity? The whole force of the apostle’s words is lost on such an hypothesis. But take the true view of this noble passage. Regard the writer as speaking of the mighty stoop of Infinite Godhead, and all becomes plain!

We may select as our next reference, that contained in the same Apostle’s Epistle to the Philippians, in which he clearly and indubitably claims for Christ the possession of a nature and perfections immeasurably superior to the most exalted and glorious of dependent existences—in other words DIVINE. “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” . . . “God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Stronger and more emphatic still is the Apostle’s language in another sublime passage, where he anticipates the very heresies of later centuries, and controverts the erroneous views of those who would assign to Christ no more than an exalted place in the ranks of creatureship, making Him ‘an inferior workman, creating for the glory of a higher Master—for a God superior to Himself’—a passive instrument rather than an original and originating agent. He vindicates His dignity and glory as Lord, ‘in His creative power, His eternal existence, His heirship over the universe;—that universe, the theatre on which He is to accomplish His purposes and display His perfections . . . ascribing to Him, therefore, infinite power, infinite wisdom.’ “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by Him were all things created

* Phil. ii. 6-11.

that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."*

It has been well observed, that "while the Epistle to the Hebrews lays almost more emphasis than any other book of the New Testament upon Christ's true humanity, it is nevertheless certain that no other book more implicitly asserts the reality of His divine prerogatives."† Let us listen to the impressive exordium: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed *heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds*, Who being the brightness of *His glory*, and the *express image of His person*, and UPHOLDING *all things by the word of*

* Col. i. 15-17.

† Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 483.
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*His power,** when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He (only) saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire. But unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever." †

We have already listened to the apostle John in the opening of his *Gospel*. Let us now hear the same honoured disciple in the opening of his *Epistles*. We may repeat the introductory

* "A Hebraism for '*His powerful word*,' conveying the idea that He does not sustain the world with effort, but by His simple volition."—*Dr Pye Smith*,

† Heb. i. 1-8.

words : " That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)" Again, " And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we might know Him that is true ; and we are in Him that is true, even *in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and (the) eternal life.*"*

Another indirect class of evidences is furnished conjointly, by passages, contained in gospels and epistles, in which *adoration* is rendered to Christ. We know that worship or adoration is given to *God* alone. We know, moreover, from various statements in the Old Testament, how jealous the Divine Being is of giving His glory to another. " It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

* 1 John v. 20.

When St John, too, fell at the feet of the angel, and was about to render him an act of homage, he was rebuked by the words, "See thou do it not . . . worship *God*."* The very fact, therefore, of the Son having adoration ascribed to Him, forms surely the strongest testimony, that not only is He higher than any angelic being, but has a title to deity itself. We have already heard our blessed Lord Himself claiming the prerogative, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."† "That at the name of Jesus," says the Apostle, "every knee should bow."‡ More than once in the apostolic benedictions, He is put on an equality with the Father, as if entitled to receive parity of homage—"The grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost."§ And if we pass from the Church militant to the Church triumphant in heaven, described in the Book of Revelation; as an appropriate close to

* Rev. xxii. 9. † John v. 23. ‡ Phil. ii. 10. § 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

all, we listen to the divine ascription of the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing."* No testimony or tribute to the Saviour's supreme Divinity can go beyond this, in its impressiveness and sublimity. We behold, in wondrous vision, concentric circles of worshippers in the upper sanctuary—"angels, living ones, and elders." They are represented as gathered, in devoutest adoration, around a slain and wounded Lamb, gazing on these mysterious symbols of suffering in a place where suffering is unknown:—The Rock of Ages furrowed with mysterious clefts and crevices! From one of these circles (the inner favoured group of redeemed humanity), there comes the ascription which they alone are qualified to utter, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." But the key-note thus struck by the white-robed band, is taken up

* Rev. v. 12.

by teeming myriads, reaching to the outskirts of illimitable space. All creation becomes vocal with the hymn to the same enthroned Lamb, once more associated and identified with the Supreme God :—" And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever." . . . "And the four living ones said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped HIM THAT LIVETH FOR EVER AND EVER."*

Such then, briefly and imperfectly summarised, are some of the leading scriptural attestations to the Saviour's Divinity ; and we would say to all readers on the retrospect, " As wise

* Rev. v. 13, 14.

men, judge ye." Are we prepared to bow with reverence before Him, and to say in words of more emphatic adhesion and acknowledgment than those of Nathaniel, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel?"* or, like one who loved Him as her Son, but adored Him as her God—"My spirit hath rejoiced in *God* my Saviour?"† or with the once doubting, but now convinced and believing Thomas—"My Lord and my God?"‡ Let us seek to grasp and realise the full grandeur of this Truth of truths; to have it more frequently before us as a subject of devout contemplation,—that the Christ of Nazareth, the Saviour of Calvary, —He who bled for me as Man upon the cross, and pleads for me on the throne, is the Mighty Jehovah; that He was before all things; that He reared every arch and pillar in the Universe Temple. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all

* John i. 49.

† Luke i. 47.

‡ John xx. 28.

by their names." Before these stars were made, before these altar-fires were lighted in immensity, before man or angel or seraph, throne or dominion or principality or power existed, this all-glorious Being lived—one in essence and substance with the Eternal Father.*

* The testimonies of some of the Writers of the first centuries are worth tabulating in an abbreviated form. They will be found in more amplified shape, in Canon Liddon's admirable treatise.

Ignatius calls Him "my God;" *Polycarp*, "the everlasting Son of God;" *Iustyn Martyr*, "First-born of God, and so God;" *Melito of Sardis*, "God the Word;" *Irenæus*, "He shares the name of the only true God;" *Clement*, "the living God who suffered, and who is adored;" *Origen*, "the God Jesus;" *Tertullian*, "God and Lord over all men," "a crucified God."—*Bampton Lectures*, p. 617.

Although the transition is a great one, and the testimony that of a very different witness, we may here transcribe, also as quoted in the volume of the same writer, the following remarkable statement:—

"When Napoleon had leisure to gather up the results of his unparalleled life, conversing, as was his habit, about the great men of the ancient world, and comparing himself with them, he turned, it is said, to Count Montholon, with the inquiry, 'Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?' The question was declined, and Napoleon proceeded, 'Well, then, I will tell you. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself, have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love; and to this very day millions would die for Him. . . . I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you

Any lowlier view of the nature and dignity of Christ would not suffice. It would be like blotting out the sun from these visible heavens to attempt to erase the supreme divinity of Jesus from the creed of Christendom. No angel, no

all these were men, and I am a man : none else is like Him ; Jesus Christ was more than man. . . . I have inspired multitudes with an enthusiastic devotion, that they would have died for me . . . but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. . . . Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man towards the Unseen, that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is, beyond all others, difficult to satisfy. He asks for that which a philosopher may seek in vain at the hands of his friends, or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother. He asks for the human heart. He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally ; and forthwith His demand is granted. 'Wonderful ! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the Empire of Christ. All who sincerely believe in Him, experience that remarkable supernatural love towards Him. This phenomenon is unaccountable ; it is altogether beyond the scope of man's creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame ; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. This is it which strikes me most. I have often thought of it. This it is which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ.'—*Ib. Note*, p. 272.

creature could save me. The incarnation of the highest archangel before the throne, and his voluntary substitution as a sacrificial offering for my sins, would be a simple impossibility. No creature of God can atone for the sin of a fellow-creature. The fact of creatureship would vitiate the work of such a surety. As a creature, though the loftiest and purest, his life is not his own. He is himself a pensioner on God's bounty. In dying for me, and forfeiting his life, he would be forfeiting that which was not his to give. Add to this, if Christ be no more than the first and most exalted of angels, He would necessarily be devoid of the attributes and prerogatives of Deity. Denude Him of these, and how dwarfed and limited immediately become His capabilities, alike as Intercessor and King. If a mere creature, even though on the pinnacles of creature-being, how could He be *omnipresent* with His Church? He could listen afar, so to speak, to the hum of the world's swarming population, as we do from window or balcony, on some great festal occasion,



to the multitudinous voices—‘the loud stunning tide’ of the surging throng beneath, without being able to catch or discriminate one articulate utterance. But He must be God—He must have the attributes of ubiquity and omniscience, to enter into every separate home and take cognisance of every separate heart, and have an ear for the music of every separate prayer, and a hand to wipe every falling tear. As our Great High Priest on the throne, He is said to wear the breastplate gleaming with the names of all His covenant Israel. But how could He thus bear them, in the sense of knowing each individual name, if that heart of His did not throb with the pulses of Deity? How could He control the destinies of the Church and of the world if “all power” had not been His of right? How could He be “unchangeable” if His own will and purposes were dependent on a Higher? Christ a mere *man*! Then what a mockery to say to slumbering millions, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee

life.”* Oh, if He be but a creature, though the highest in rank in the heavenly peerage, I cannot confide to Him my eternal destinies. If He who bowed His head on that cross be a mere man and no more, I cannot look to Him as *the Rock of Ages*! A creature! as well pillow my head on the unstable wave. But blessed be God, I *can* plant my foot upon the living Rock of His deity. I can trust in Him, not as a prince, or as the son of man, in whom there would be no stay: but I can “trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is THE ROCK OF AGES.”† Invoking Him as such, I can with devout confidence of a gracious answer, join in the prayer, “O GOD the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!”

Indeed, independent of the imperative need of Deity to qualify Him to be a complete Saviour, we cannot read the record of His own wondrous life, without seeing in it the element

* Ephes. v. 14.

† Marginal rendering; Isa. xxvi. 4.

of supporting Godhead. What but Deity could have upheld Him in His own trial hour? Look at His temptations in the wilderness and the garden! What but the Rock of His Godhead could have stood, as wave after wave rolled against it? *Adam* was a pure and glorious creature. But when these same billows swept over him, he was borne away like a reed on the waters. *Satan* was once a pure and glorious creature (supposed to have been at the head of all created intelligences), a chieftain and lord amid principalities and powers. The billows of temptation in *his* case, too, came:—he was driven with his legions down into the fathomless abyss. If Christ had been only a creature, how can we dare predicate of Him that He could have better withstood the assaults of evil? But as these crested breakers surged against ‘the Rock,’ we know how they receded, chafed and buffeted. The Prince of this world came and had nothing in Him!

Reader, enter this glorious Cleft! Come, adore the mystery of godliness, “*God* manifest in the

flesh :”—the Divine Being who created by His word—who sustains by His providence—who, as the God-man, redeems with His blood. Come, contemplate His natal hour with its mystic star and shining hosts of angels, the silence of night made vocal with celestial song. Come, behold His wondrous works. See, as we have just been beholding, sickness taking wings at His word. See demons crouching rebuked in His presence, and yielding reluctant admission to His claims. See Him reading the inmost thoughts of an out-cast sinner at the well of Samaria. See Him claiming power to forgive sin by the palsied couch at Capernaum. See the waves of His own Gennesaret having their turmoil quelled—rocking themselves to rest at His omnific “Peace be still.” See Death casting his iron crown at the feet of the Lord of life :—its fettered Victim bursting the bands that swathed him. Does the Socinian say, Who but man could shed these tears at Bethany? Yes, we reply, but who, save God, could speak these words, “Lazarus, come forth!”—“loose him, and let him go!” Come

to the cross of Calvary. See the sun hiding his face at the death-throes of his Almighty Maker, and earth heaving convulsive to her core ! See the mysterious Sufferer encircling with a halo of glory the brows of a dying malefactor, and in the hour of His own deepest humiliation, opening the gates of Paradise to the vilest and most miserable of sinners ! Come to His own grave, the sepulchre at Golgotha : behold the crowning proof of His divinity, when “ declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead.” See Him standing as the God-man with His vacant sepulchre behind Him—with all the chains and bonds and missiles of Satan, meant for His destruction, now gathered as trophies of victory. Come, see the pictures drawn of His future universal reign, by psalmists and prophets,—“ the Great Jubilee of pardoned humanity,” when welcomed as Prince of Peace—King of kings and Lord of lords, to the throne of universal empire: Midian, Ephah and Sheba—(the Bedouins of the desert—the children of the far east), hastening on dromedaries with their

gold and incense: the ships of Tarshish, the symbols of the civilisation of the west, bounding over the waves with their costly offerings of fealty and adoration. The glory of Lebanon on the north, and of Ethiopia in the south, is laid tributary at His feet: cedar, and "fir, and pine, and box together"—the wealth of the material creation, beautifying and adorning the place of His sanctuary: His dominion extending "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." That dominion secures deliverance, redemption, peace: the numbers of His spiritual adherents—the members of His Church, are likened to doves flying to their windows;—flocks of living souls, "whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold," speeding for shelter and repose into the clefts of this mighty ROCK: and yet room for all! See kings and princes casting their crowns and sceptres before Him, esteeming it an honour to be servants and vassals of a Mightier:—His name enduring for ever, —continuing long as the sun:—"the whole earth

filled with His glory :” the voice of a great multitude heard in heaven,—increasing till it is like the voice of many waters,—deepening into the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, “ Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” And then, as the Drama of Time is in the act of closing, behold Him coming “with clouds :” (clouds, the invariable symbol and emblem of deity :) every eye seeing Him : behold Him seated “as the Ancient of Days”—His garment “white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool,—His throne like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire ; thousand thousands ministering to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him. Yes ! let the Unitarian take His Gospel without Godhead in it :—let Infidelity attempt to reduce the Person and mission of the adorable Immanuel to that of the mere Founder of a new system of divine philosophy, a new Head of a religious school ;—be it ours to pay a nobler and truer homage to Him who is unveiled to us in sacred story as “the

Word," "the Life," "the Light," "the Truth," "the Omnipresent," "the Heartsearcher," the "Beginning and the ending," the Creator of worlds, the Redeemer of souls—the Wonderful—the Adored of angels—the appointed Judge—the enthroned King—the I AM of eternal ages! Be it ours to testify that the struggles and toils of 1800 years have not been made, to defend and vindicate a monstrous delusion:—that thousands of crowned martyrs now in heaven have not shed their blood to uphold a lie. Be it ours to see in Him, the Creator who has plenished the universe with worlds—the glory of illimitable Godhead enshrined in a human tabernacle;—aye, and better still, be it ours to be able to say in reverential faith, as we fall adoring at His feet, "This God shall be our God for ever and ever!"

We would only imitate the example of the Psalmist, and in conclusion, call upon all creation to rise and do homage to this its Incarnate Maker. Praise Him in the heavens! Praise Him in the heights. 'Thou Sun of this great world,

both eye and soul,' reflect His glory! Moon! take thy silver lyre—strike thy harp in the praise of thy God! Stars, gather your brilliant gems as a coronal for His brow! Floods, rise and thunder forth His praise. Every flower that blooms, come and waft your fragrance around the rose of Sharon. Lispering infancy, come with your hosannahs:—Penitence, come bathed in tears:—Sorrow, come in the extremity of anguish to this Divine Sympathiser, this living God yet your Brother:—Youth, come with your green ears of consecration:—Manhood, come in your strength:—Old age, come leaning on your staff. Come, saints and prophets of olden time! Come, noble army of martyrs! Come, ye heavenly hosts! cherubim and seraphim, gather in to the universal homage! Let the Church triumphant echo back the strains of "the Church throughout all the world"—"THOU ART THE KING OF GLORY, O CHRIST: THOU ART THE EVERLASTING SON OF THE FATHER!"

The Humanity of Christ.

"And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place ; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—*Isa.* xxxii. 2.

"But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—*Phil.* ii. 7, 8.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—*Gal.* iv. 4, 5.

"God was manifest in the flesh."—*1 Tim.* iii. 16.

"For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels ; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham."—*Heb.* ii. 16.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—*Heb.* ii. 11.

"Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me), to do Thy will, O God."—*Heb.* x. 5-7.

"AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."—*John* i. 14.

"The Word of God, Jesus Christ, on account of His immense love, became what we are, that He might make us what He is."—*Irenæus*, 169.

"There is no room in the inn for the Child miraculously born ; the earth does not receive its God. He has no suitable dwelling-place in all the world. He whom heaven and earth cannot contain, lies in a manger"—*Simon de Cassia*.

"If Jesus were God only, and not man, He could not suffer anything whereby to satisfy Divine Justice ; if man only, and not God, He could not satisfy, even though He suffered. If man only, His satisfaction could not be sufficient for God ; if God only, it would not be suitable for man. And, therefore, to be capable of suffering for men, and able to satisfy God, Himself must be both God and man."—*Bishop Beveridge*.

"The one true and perfect Flower which has ever unfolded itself out of the root and stalk of humanity."—*Archbishop Trench*.

III.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH"—

John i. 14.

IN the previous chapters, the endeavour was made, as fully as our limits would admit, to adduce scriptural proof in support of that foundation-article of our most holy faith, the supreme divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: "*The Word was GOD.*" Let us, with a similar devout and reverential spirit, now turn our thoughts to another great cleft in the Rock of Ages, the correlative doctrine of *the Saviour's Humanity*; when (adopting the translation or paraphrase of the apostle's words, made by an exegetical writer of the fifth century), "hiding His own dignity, He took the condition of extreme humilia-

tion, and clothed Himself in the human form." *

"*The Word was made Flesh!*" What a transition! What a stoop for that Infinite Being whom we found proclaiming Himself the Alpha and the Omega, writing His name on the Palace-walls of Eternity, "I AM THAT I AM!" for "The Ancient of days" to assume the nature and take the form of a cradled infant, sleeping on a virgin mother's breast!—the Plant of heavenly renown to become "a root out of a dry ground," without beauty or comeliness! We have no plumb-line to sound the depths of that humiliation—no arithmetic by which it can be submitted to any process of calculation. To use an illustration, which has been appositely employed; if we can entertain for a moment the startling supposition of the loftiest created spirit in heaven abjuring his angel-nature, and (suddenly metamorphosed,) becoming an insect

* *Theodoret*. Luther's rendering of the same passage is, "Divested Himself, and assumed a servant's form; became like any other man, and was found in demeanour as a man: He humbled Himself," &c.

or a worm, we can, in some feeble degree, estimate the descent involved in the transformation ; because, however great the disparity, they are both *creatures* of God, though at the antipodes of being. But, for the Illimitable, Everlasting Jehovah, Himself to become incarnate ; the Creator to take the nature of the created ; the Infinite to be joined with the finite ; Deity to be linked with dust ;—this baffles all our comprehension. We can only lie in adoring reverence, and exclaim with the apostle, “O the depth !” If such an idea had been suggested to reason, how it would have been rejected as impossible and inadmissible, a wild and unwarrantable dream of imagination. What we have to deal with, however, is not a matter of vague theory or speculation, but a marvellous historic fact ; for, “Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth,” God has “in very deed dwelt with men on the earth !”

We shall not consider it necessary to occupy space in quoting passages of Scripture in proof of the Saviour’s Humanity ; for the present is

not (in our days at least), like the theme of last chapter, a disputed, controverted one—a keenly contested question in polemical divinity, demanding that we sift scripture by scripture, text by text, in vindicating and defending it. Assuming its truth, let us proceed to offer a few general remarks on the nature of that humanity which the adorable Redeemer took into union with His Godhead.

I. It was a *real* Humanity. Notwithstanding what has just been said, as to the general acceptance, in the present age of the Church, of orthodox views on the subject of this great collateral doctrine of the Christian system, the reader may doubtless be aware, that one of the earliest phases in which Antichrist revealed himself in the primitive Church, and one of the forms of error which the Apostle John was called specially to combat, was a denial of the veritable assumption on the part of the Redeemer, of the nature of man. “Many deceivers,” says he, “are entered into the world, who confess not that

Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”* They regarded His Incarnation as a mere phantom or illusion ; that His sufferings were not real, but apparent ; because His Godhead-nature made the endurance of agony impossible. Their conception of these sufferings seems to have resembled the impression produced in gazing on the desert mirage ;—the *feeling* of a reality, though it be no more than an optical deception. But the language of the sacred writer is implicit and incontrovertible ; “the Word was made flesh and dwelt,” (or, as that expression means in the original,) “*tabernacled* among us.” He pitched His tent like a Pilgrim in the midst of human encampments ; and it was beneath the curtains, so to speak, of a true humanity, that Deity in His Godhead-nature resided. With one notable exception, to which we shall presently allude, that tent was exposed, like the others which surrounded it, to the violence of the moral elements. “He *suffered*,

* 2 John 7.

being *tempted*.”* “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.”† “He *bare* our sins” (not by simulating sufferings which He did not really endure)—“He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”‡

In speaking, however, of the Saviour’s real humanity, we must be careful to avoid another heresy of the early Church, and to maintain the distinction of the two natures. There was no interconversion of these. The Godhead was not merged in the humanity, neither was the humanity blended with the Godhead. There was no alteration of the divinity in its appropriation of the veil of flesh; neither was the human element transmuted by its union with supreme Godhead. “He was God in all that was god-like, and man in all that was manlike.” In a word, He was the infinite Jehovah; and yet the Brother-kinsman in distinction of nature, but in the unity of an all-glorious Person. In the

* Heb. ii. 18.

† Heb. ii. 14.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

words of *Owen*, "Each nature doth preserve its own natural essential properties entirely into and in itself; without mixture, without composition or confusion. The deity, in the abstract, is not made the humanity, nor on the contrary, the nature of the man Christ Jesus is not deified; it is not made a God; it doth not in heaven coalesce into one nature with the divine by a composition of them. It is exalted in a fullness of all divine perfection, ineffably above the glory of angels and men. It hath communications from God in glorious light, love, and power ineffably above them all; but it is still a creature." *

It is unnecessary for us to dwell on the evidences borne in the Redeemer's earthly history to the reality of His human soul. Going back in reverential thought to the secluded home at Nazareth, we see, both in His physical and mental development, accordance with the ordi-

* *Abridged from Owen, "On the glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ."* Similarly, Archbishop Usher remarks, "We must therefore hold that there are two distinct natures in Him; and two so distinct, that they do not make one compounded nature, but still remaining uncompounded, and unconfounded together."

nary laws and conditions of our nature. *Men-
tally*, we see Him "subject to His parents,"
"advancing in wisdom." *Physically*, we see Him
"growing in stature," progressing from the help-
lessness and dependence of infancy and childhood
to matured youth: ay, and in order that even
in this respect He might fulfil all righteousness,
Himself paying by His daily toil the penalty of
the original curse: "In the sweat of thy brow
shalt thou eat bread." It is indeed a wondrous
thought, and one which must for ever dissociate
humble labour from dishonour or disgrace, that in
union with the infinite, incomprehensible nature
of Him who planned the worlds,—who of old, from
everlasting, set rule and compass on the face of
the deep, meting out the heavens with the span
of His hand, and "without whom was not any-
thing made that was made,"—might be seen the
lowly Son of the lowly Mary, busied at His
reputed father's bench in a peasant's cottage—
shaping the instruments of husbandry—the
drops of labour falling from His forehead!
There is a well-known authentic instance of

an earthly monarch, entering in the disguise of a craftsman one of our own dockyards; laying aside, for the time being, royal attire for the artisan's rough garb. But what was that?—the dimmest shadowy type of this mystery of Incarnate Love;—of Him, who though in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant of servants! And through all the incidents of His future life, may His veritable humanity be traced. Take one example—His “creaturely dependence” on God, as manifested in His habitual habit of prayer. We see Him rising “a great while before day,” and resorting alone, either to the depths of some grove on Olivet, or to the solitude of the higher and more secluded mountain retreats above Bethsaida and Capernaum—there pouring out His soul; now in calm thankfulness and praise, now in strong crying and tears, into the ears of His Father in heaven; and finally, with the same breath of supplication, commend-

ing into that Father's hands His departing spirit.

Reader, rejoice in the testimony afforded in the life and ministry of Jesus, to His real assumption, of our nature. "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest."* In your sorrows, you can think, Jesus sorrowed. In your temptations, you can think, Jesus was tempted. In your tears, you can think, Jesus wept. In the anticipation of your very death-hour, you can think, Jesus died!

"In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of sorrows had a part."

II. It was a *pure* and *spotless* Humanity. In speaking of the Word made flesh and tabernacling (or tenting) among us, we have already incidentally remarked, that there was only one respect in which that mysterious tabernacle differed from the surrounding human encampments. It is this—that the Son of Man was

* Heb. ii. 17.

“yet without sin.” “He was holy, harmless, undefiled.”* “He wore the manacles of the curse entailed by the apostasy of men;”† but no more. Amid ten thousand contaminating influences around—mingling in the midst of scenes of temptation, “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.”‡ As the ray of light falling on what is either physically or morally polluted—the fetid marsh—the plague-stricken city—the abode of villany, still retains its purity; so this divine Life which was “the *Light* of men,” moved amidst sin’s robber-haunts—a world of moral debasement and pollution, and yet remained undimmed and untainted. His was not the mere outward drapery of goodness, which sometimes is seen to screen the realities of the fallen and corrupted heart; not like the verdant ivy which, with its graceful festoons, often conceals the crumbling ruin; not the apparently pellucid well, which, when stirred, reveals the sediment of its miry, slimy depths; not the

* Heb. vii. 26.

† *Dr Pye Smith.*

‡ 1 Peter ii. 22.

apparently translucent lake sleeping before you in summer mid-day in calm loveliness, but which, on the storm being let loose, becomes a wild inland sea of turgid mud. But rather a golden goblet filled with living water—with no deposit or admixture of evil. His soul no passion ever disturbed; His brow no anger ever clouded; His serenity no insults ever ruffled. He could make the triumphant challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"* Every pulse of that stainless nature beat responsive to the will of a Higher, and gloried in this conscious subjectivity. And it was in every way needful, as the Surety and Substitute of His people, that He should be so. As one chip or flaw in a piece of statuary vitiates the work of the sculptor; as one speck—one grain of sand in the casting of the telescopic lens, renders it worthless to the optician; so, one taint of pollution in the soul of the incarnate Redeemer—one flaw in the beauteous moral image, would have vitiated His whole

* John viii. 46.

work as our Surety. The true paschal sacrifice must be the immaculate Lamb of God. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb *without blemish, and without spot.*"*

III. And yet, let us carefully note, that though a sinless, it was a *suffering* humanity which the Saviour of the world assumed.

And we may begin with what, to a holy and elevated Being, is ever the intensest form and experience of suffering—the suffering arising from moral causes; the continual presence of moral evil, and the subjection to fierce temptation; for "He was in all points *tempted* even as we are."† We have just seen that He was incapable of sin, and therefore incapable of yielding to the assaults of evil. But why such exemption? Was it because of the immaculate earthly nature? We cannot think that this

* 1 Peter i. 18.

† Heb. iv. 15.

would be in itself sufficient to account for His immunity from successful temptation ; for if it had, then, as has been well remarked, Adam, as a perfectly pure and sinless creature in Paradise ; and Satan, with all his host of once pure and sinless angels, could on this supposition never have fallen—never have swerved from their allegiance and love. In the case of the adorable Redeemer, it was the Godhead which sustained the humanity, and made it impervious alike to the malignant assaults of human agents, and to spiritual wickednesses in high places. The very fact, however, of this untainted purity, made Him exquisitely sensitive to all contact with sin ! We cannot wonder that it was so. Imagine, even on earth, a virtuous and elevated mind cast by circumstances into constant companionship with the vile—the debased—the degraded—those whose every thought and utterance is pollution,—what refined torture, beyond any pang of mere physical suffering, would it be to such to be doomed to a lifelong association like this ! How intense, then, beyond

what imagination can conceive, must *His* sufferings have been, whose *sinless nature had to encounter, day by day, every varied phase and form of evil; the baseness and treachery of man, the malignity of devils, and of the Father of lies! Nor was it moral suffering to which alone He was subjected; His physical nature inherited all the innocent frailties of humanity. As Isaiah says, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." He was "the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He hungered, and thirsted, and wept. He felt fatigue of body, as well as anguish of soul. He was thankful to rest, a weary pilgrim, by a well on the wayside. He was glad to sleep on the ruffled bosom of the lake, "with a coil of ropes for His pillow." Though with a moral grandeur superior to earth's noblest heroism, He "set His face stedfastly" to encounter the hour and power of darkness,—yet it was accompanied with deepest soul distress and mental perturbation—"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I held in anguish

till it be accomplished.”* When the trial hour arrived, He needed, as we do, the prop of human presence and sympathy—“My soul is exceeding sorrowful:” . . . “tarry ye here, and *watch* with Me.” Drops of blood, the exponent of His agony, fell from His brow, before that brow was wreathed with thorns, or His body pierced with iron nail or soldier’s spear. If He had been exempt from all this, He would have lacked one of the great qualifications of a Surety-Saviour, viz., the capacity of entering with tender commiseration into the sorrows and sufferings of His people. But “we have not an High Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”† There is not, as we have already noted, the trial which afflicts His brethren, which did not in an inconceivably intenser form afflict Him. Contumely, unkindness, the abandonment or treachery of trusted followers—bodily pain—mental disquietude—man-desertion and God-

* Luke xx. 50;—*Dr Pye Smith’s rendering.* † Heb. iv. 15.

desertion—the bitterness of bereavement—the decease of beloved friends—death itself. Ay, and there was, in all these sufferings, one ingredient from which we are mercifully exempt. *Our* sufferings and sorrows come upon us generally by surprise—unknown, unanticipated ;—in *His* case, all were marked out, by the foreknowledge of Godhead, to His omniscient eye. How comforting and consoling, our divine Redeemer thus identifying Himself with our tried, tempted, woe-worn humanity ! Moreover, in stooping to assume our nature, He selected not the exalted condition, but linked Himself rather with poverty and distress and dependence ; that the poorest and the humblest, the most wretched and forlorn, might catch balm-words of comfort from the lips of Him who often had not where to lay His head. How different, in this respect, from the mythical incarnations of pagan story ! When the favoured gods of Olympus come down to earth, it is in some shape or form which leaves their subject-mortals awestruck and crouching at their feet. Such was the incarnation, too, of

the Messiah expected by the Jews. Owing to His lowly birth and circumstances, the Christ of Nazareth was not their ideal Saviour. He was not the "Angel-God," who spake to their Fathers in the wilderness, or who came in vision to their exile prophet on the banks of Chebar. In their dreams of His advent, they thought of Him as some ineffable Being with "the paved work of sapphire under His feet, and as it were the body of Heaven in its clearness;" or speaking to them out of the cloudy pillar, or under the overshadowing wings of the cherubim. We repeat, had He appeared thus, He could not have identified Himself with His people nor they with Him. But when He comes, it is leading a life of penury and humiliation. His heart bled for every form of human wretchedness. The feeblest cry of human suffering never reached His ear in vain. He wept over obduracy of heart, as well as sorrow of spirit. What a fountain of love is His soul as His last hours drew on! With what majestic utterances does He plead, in the sublime prayer of the upper room, in

behalf of the Church throughout all the world ! With what exquisite pathos did He comfort the disciples in the prospect of separation ! With what tender sympathy did He speak to a sorrowing mother in farewell accents from the cross ! The words of Isaiah are a truthful comment from first to last on His earthly pilgrimage—"Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."*

"Thus it is written, and thus *it was necessary*, that Christ should SUFFER" (Luke xxiv. 46).

This leads us to observe still further—

IV. That the Redeemer's was a broad and *comprehensive humanity*. It was so in several respects. One of these may be best illustrated by contrast with the character of His precursor, John the Baptist. Of its own peculiar type,

* Isa. xxv. 4.

John's was a remarkable specimen of a consecrated nature: bold, heroic, earnest, unselfish, self-sacrificing, he was quite the man needed for the times. But he was abnormal. His life was not the pattern or mould which was to shape that of the average Christian of the future. The desert was his home. Austere, unsocial; severed from the world's stir and bustle, and from family claims and amenities, he initiated the existence adopted by thousands of anchorites in after ages. The ascetic, however, is not the noble side or type of humanity. That better phase Jesus adopted. The towns and cities and villages of Galilee and Judea were His places of residence. He subjected Himself to no extravagant self-mortification. He mingled in the world. He cared not for the stigma that He was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners." He sanctified with His presence occasions of joy and domestic intercourse. He was found, now at a publican's house, now at the feast of a rich Pharisee, now at a marriage scene—a festive gathering, and

taking His disciples along with Him : now in the bosom of a Bethany home, clinging to congenial hearts,—Himself, the Dove of Heaven, loving to fold His weary wing, from time to time, in these human rock-clefts—thither escaping from the windy storm and tempest. He would thus reveal Himself as a *Brother*, not in the false acceptance of the recluse, abjuring the haunts and sympathies of men, but One mingling (as He knew the mass of His people in all coming time would do), in the throng of a work-day world, and the rough contacts of common life ; moving in the midst of human hearts and homes, ministering to human sorrows and grappling with human temptations. Yes ! let us think of that lowly nature of His, in its capacity of identifying itself with every class and every phase of being ; embracing in its amplitude those who had hitherto been neglected and disowned. Rome was accustomed to deify the manly virtues alone—Strength, Courage, Heroic endurance. Greece wreathed her chaplets around the brows of her intellectual heroes,—her poets and philosophers, her sculptors

and painters; but the weak, the ignorant, the oppressed, had none to vindicate their cause till *He* came, who pronounced "Blessed," not the great, or rich, or powerful, or learned,—but the meek, the lowly, the poor in spirit, the persecuted, him that had no helper! Hence, as we have already seen, groups composed of every diversity of character tracked His footsteps and hailed in Him a Brother. Stern, strong men like Peter; intellectual, thoughtful men like Thomas; loving and meditative men like John. Penitence crept unabashed to His feet, and bathed them confidingly with tears. Sorrow came with sobbing heart and speechless emotion to be comforted. The poor came with their tale of long endured misery. Infancy came stretching out its tiny arm, and smiled delighted in His embrace. While He rejoiced with them that rejoiced He wept with them that wept. The fainting multitudes moved Him to compassion; the one suppliant in the crowd who touched His garment-hem, arrested His steps and evoked His mercy. Every weary wandering bird, with drooping

pinion, seemed to come and perch on the thick branches of this mighty Cedar of God! Or, to change the figure, we have pictured to us, in living spiritual reality, a Fountain of infinite mercy—a vast pool of Bethesda;—its porches crowded with every diverse type of character, bearing the superscription, “He healeth them all.” See Him at last on the cross, with His arms extended, as if in this same comprehensive humanity He would embrace mankind: or, when rising silently from the Mount of Ascension, with outstretched hands He poured His benediction on a receding world! Little had earth imagined the blessing when Incarnate Mercy walked her ungrateful soil! If the princes of this world had known it, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory!”

“O my Dove, who art in the clefts of the Rock,”—O Believer, who hast sought and found shelter in the glorious crevices, come and anew take refuge in the contemplation of the perfect Manhood of the adorable Son of God! Delight often to think of Him as a Brother in your

nature. It is because they come welling from the depths of a *human* heart—because their music vibrates on a human lip—that the words are so unspeakably tender, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Exalted, indeed, and full of comfort is the truth unfolded in the preceding chapters;—transcendently glorious is that cleft of the Rock, the Supreme Deity of Christ; but in one sense *more* comforting to downcast, fearing, aching hearts, to think of Him as “God with *us*!” Hence, when the old Prophet, looking down the vista of ages to the glorious gospel shelter, would single out the element in the contemplation most precious and consolatory, what does he select? Is it that *Jehovah*, in the might of His omnipotence, is “a refuge and strength, a present help in trouble?” No. But “A *man* shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” A *man*! Man is not always so. Earthly friendships are not thus stable and enduring.

Often have we to write, under the sense of bitter estrangement, over the memories of bygone fellowships, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." "Cursed be he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." But here is one glorious exception. Ye that are out buffeting the storm, exposed to the sirocco blast of the desert, battling with care, harassed with anxiety, prostrated with bereavement, stricken with conscious guilt, longing for safe rest and anchorage from earth's sins and sorrows:—can understand the deep meaning of the central words in the importunate prayer of blind Bartimeus at the gate of Jericho—"Jesus, *Thou Son of David* (*Thou Elder Brother*), have mercy on me!"* And that Humanity, as we shall have occasion more specially to observe hereafter, is now on the Throne, and will be for ever. We have noted in the opening chapter, that he who loved on earth to pillow his head on the bosom of his Lord, when he subsequently saw that Divine

* Luke xviii. 38.

Saviour in the splendour of His ascension-glories, "fell at His feet as one dead." But he knew in a moment, by the touch of the gracious hand, and the tones of the unchanging voice, that it was "that same Jesus,"—"I *am* He *that* liveth!" Oh blessed truth, Jesus liveth—as a glorified MAN! For me, in human nature, He once walked and wept and bled on earth. For me, in human nature, He now pleads in heaven! It will be from glorified human lips the welcome will at last be given, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom!"

Can we echo the prophetic utterance of a saint who lived long antecedent to the Seer of Patmos; and who, through a glorious vista-view of the future, was able triumphantly to exclaim, "I know that my Redeemer (lit. *My Kinsman*) liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and that though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God?"* Or, as that has been rendered, "Yet,

* Job xix. 25, 26.

in God, shall I see my flesh : "—In Christ, who is God, I shall see the human nature ; I shall see my own flesh.

The shadowy patriarchal creed of a distant age and dispensation, was subsequently translated into the personal experiences and hopes of a New Testament apostle. Entering into this new cleft of the Rock of Ages, can we make Paul's fervent words our own ?—" I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto HIM against that day !"

Christ the Surety-Substitute.

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited."—*Lev. xvii. 21, 22.*

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."—*Isa. liii. 5.*

"Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself."—*Dan. ix. 26.*

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."—*2 Cor. v. 21.*

"Who His ownself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, by whose stripes ye were healed."—*1 Peter ii. 24.*

"CHRIST ALSO HATH ONCE SUFFERED FOR SINS, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST, THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD."—*1 Peter iii. 18.*

"The Lord redeemed us with His own blood, and gave His life for our life, and so effected our salvation."—*Irenæus, 169.*

"To the sinner, doomed to eternal punishment, and unable to redeem himself, God the Father says, 'Take My only begotten Son and give Him for thee;' and the Son says, 'Take Me and redeem Thyself.' . . . Holy Father, look down from the height of Thy sanctuary, and behold this mighty sacrifice which our great High Priest, Thy Holy Child Jesus, offers for the sins of His brethren, and have mercy on the multitude of our transgressions."—*Anselm, 1093.*

"By His passion which He suffered, He merited, that as many as believe in Him, shall be as well justified by Him, as though they had never done any sin, and as though they had fulfilled the law to the uttermost . . . He changeth with us. He taketh our sins and wickedness from us, and giveth unto us His holiness, righteousness, justice, fulfilling of the law, and so consequently everlasting life."—*Latimer, 1549.*

"My debt is very great, neither can I pay anything thereof; but I trust in the riches and benignity of My Surety. Let Him free me which became Surety for me, which hath taken my debt upon Himself."—*John Gerard, 1606.*

IV.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"CHRIST ALSO HATH ONCE SUFFERED FOR SINS, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST, THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD."—1 Pet. iii. 18.

MYSTERIOUS, but most precious Cleft in the *Rock of Ages*—the vicarious work of Christ as our Substitute and Surety !

It seems incumbent on us, thus early, in the consideration of our great theme, to contemplate the Divine expiatory Offering taken "without the camp, bearing His reproach" ; placing upon His own head the crown of thorns, that He might place upon ours a crown of glory ; having, in the might of His glorious Person overcome the sharpness of death, that He might open the kingdom of heaven to us and to all believers.

We concede, at the outset, that such a method

of atonement is quite beyond the suggestion of mere reason. Tried by the boasted "verifying faculty," or "principle of congruity" of some modern theological thinkers, it would at once be rejected as unsatisfactory and untenable. Natural law dictates, as the ordinary and equitable course of justice, that for personal guilt there must be personal retribution :—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Fatal and destructive, however, would it be to the reception of all revealed truth, were the inquirer to demand summary rejection of every doctrine, at variance with preconceived idea or natural law. What God hath unfolded and recorded, it is for us meekly, and with unquestioning docility, to receive. And if there be one truth more vividly and expressly dwelt upon in Scripture than another, it is that of a Surety-Saviour, suffering in our room and stead. If there be one utterance more frequently proclaimed than another, from Genesis to Revelation,—from Abel's first sacrifice, to the last song of the ransomed, as they gather round the slain Lamb in heaven—it is this, that "without shed-

ding of blood there is no remission!" Socinianism, and its modified rationalistic theories, in exalting the goodness and boundless beneficence of God, overlook or discard two great cardinal truths, which, despite of attempted rejection, everywhere assert themselves in the pages of Revelation—viz., that sin is an infinite evil, entailing and demanding an infinite penalty; and that God, the Almighty One to whom we are responsible, is a moral Governor, requiring the vindication of His violated law. While "mercy and truth go before His face," "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Not that there is any implied conflict or antagonism between the divine Holiness and Love: these two attributes of the Supreme Being must ever act in strictest harmony. But regarding Him as infinitely just and righteous, as well as beneficent and merciful, it would be to impeach His moral character, and to subvert the immutable principles on which His government rests, were He to grant indemnity to the guilty without any expression of His hatred at sin, or of

His obligation to visit it with condign punishment.

As "God absolute," indeed, it may be affirmed, and with truth, that He can do anything. As God absolute, He has the sovereign power to confer on His rebellious subjects a free, unlimited pardon,—a universal amnesty. At His omnipotent mandate, every rebel-chain could be broken, and this revolted orb again placed within the sphere of His regards.

But what He *could* do as the Almighty Sovereign (with reverence we say it), He could *not* do as the Righteous Lawgiver. As such, He is under a moral necessity, arising out of His own nature, to dispense His laws with equity. "It *became* Him, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* The whole teaching of Scripture represents Christ the Son of God, as identified in law

* Heb. ii. 10.

with those He came to redeem. As Adam (to use the theological term of our old divines) stood the representative or federal head of the first covenant; so Jesus, the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, stands as the vicar of His Church, in the room and stead of each of its members. Having voluntarily taken upon Him their responsibilities, He must endure in His person the penalty annexed to their transgressions. We have already seen, in the former chapter (in speaking of His assumed humanity), that He was Himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He had no personal complicity in our guilt: and we must therefore beware of the unwarrantable phraseology of those who speak of Him in connection with His vicarious work, as "becoming a sinner." We only, however, use the words of Scripture when we say "He became *Sin*." He was reckoned and dealt with, in the eye of the divine law, *as* guilty; as if the condensed transgressions of the millions He came to save ("His unknown agonies," as it is significantly expressed in the

Greek Liturgy), were poured into His mysterious cup. All the bitter experiences of His passion,—the mocking, the scourging, the jeers and taunts, the thorn-crowning, the God-desertion,—were His due, not personally, but by imputation. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us.*”* Different indeed, in kind, was the penalty endured by this Almighty Substitute, from what sinners themselves would have suffered, had they been left to undergo the full measure of punishment due to their transgressions. It belonged, however, to the Great Creditor to accept some satisfactory method, by which the infinite debt might admit of being discharged, without infringing the rights of justice, or lowering and violating the sanctity of His law. And, owing to the dignity of the Sufferer’s Person, this Atonement rendered by Christ was of surpassing value. It was the substitution of Incarnate deity. The altar of His Divine nature sancti-

* Gal. iii. 13.

fied the gift, and imparted a priceless worth to the divine oblation. As "God manifest in the flesh," He was free from the law, and the obligations of creatureship. Had He been less than divine, He could not possibly have obeyed for another. As a creature, He could not have transferred to another the merit of His obedience. Moreover, on the supposition, for a moment, of the admissibility of substitution in the case of an angelic being; one creature-substitute could only at the utmost discharge a *single* debt. It would be creature for creature, life for life. But owing to Christ's peerless dignity as the eternal Son of God, not only was He above the obligation of all natural law—"a law unto Himself," having "power over His own life;" but the sacrifice of the Divine Victim was of that infinite value, that the One offering was deemed sufficient to effect the ransom of "a multitude which no man can number." On this account, His whole work has received in theological language the appellation of a "*satisfaction*." It was, in the eye of God's righteous law, a glorious

and all-sufficient equivalent. It met all the requirements of Sovereign Justice, Righteousness and Truth. Remitting the myriad liabilities of an insolvent world, the Great Creditor signs a full discharge. The holiness of His name and nature, and the righteous principles of His moral government, remain intact and inviolate.

But let us proceed to examine the assertions of Scripture, and observe how this great truth of Christ's substitution runs throughout the Revealed Word like a golden thread. It would require a volume to do justice to the subject :— little more can be overtaken here, than to glance at a few of the more prominent Typical, Prophetical, and Apostolic testimonies.

I. THE TYPICAL. The idea of substitution is interlaced and interwoven with the whole Mosaic ritual. The voice of "the blood of sprinkling" spoke in dumb eloquence on the altars of Israel, as they ran daily with the blood of slain victims. Not a few indeed of these offerings

were *eucharistical*: but the vast bulk of them were *penal—expiatory*. Not only so, but what we wish specially to note at present is, the remarkable testimony they afford to the principle of vicarious suffering;—that the blood of the animal was shed *in lieu of another*. Every offering was a ransom for the sin, or for the life, of the human offender. It was life for life, blood for blood. The victims were subjected to the penalty incurred by the transgressor: there was a symbolic imputation of his guilt to them; and thus, *typically*, these sacrifices “were ordained to take away sin.”

We see this vicarious, or substitutionary element, in Israel’s INDIVIDUAL sacrifices, offerings made to expiate the sin of individual offenders. The offerer brought his victim, laid his hand upon its head, and made confession of his crime. “He shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall

be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*

Again, as regards the guilt of THE WHOLE CONGREGATION, the command was given, "They shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the elders of the congregation shall *lay their hands upon the head of the bullock* before the Lord, and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord. . . . And the priest shall make an ATONEMENT *for them, and it shall be forgiven them.*"†

Or, once more, as perhaps the most expressive of all types of the Great Substitution; on the solemn anniversary of THE DAY OF ATONEMENT, the High Priest, clad in his linen garments, appeared as the Representative of Israel. Two goats (constituting one offering) were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. The people stood round in mute solemnity. The one was immolated; its blood was carried within the veil, and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Lay-

* Lev. i. 3, 4.

† Lev. iv. 14, 15, 31.

ing his hands on the head of the other living animal, he made confession over it of all the sins of the people; and then, with this load of imputed guilt, it was led away into the depths of the wilderness never more to be seen. Hear the significant appointment of God Himself: "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him *all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat*; and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited (Lev. xvi.).

What type could possibly be more significant than this?—the imposition of hands, accompanied with confession of sin:—the sins of "all Israel"—typically transferred to the innocent substitute. The countless iniquities of Christ's people are surely seen meeting on the head of the great Antitypical Scape-goat—the atoning Sacrifice of Calvary, who has borne them for ever away into a land of oblivion. If all this substitu-

tionary ceremonial ritual had no reference to the Divine Antitype—then we ask, What was its design? Standing by itself, without this exponent, it is not only a meaningless appointment, but (again, with all reverence we say it), it would have been an appointment unworthy of God. There is no natural connection whatever (there is rather an inherent unfitness and incongruity), between the slaying of a mere animal, or the laying the hand on its head, and the expiation of human guilt. “It was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats” (hecatombs—heaps on heaps of slain irrational beasts, so far beneath in dignity the nature of the transgressor) “could take away sin.”* There was an utter inefficacy and inadequacy in such to expiate moral guilt. The very conscience of the offerer repudiated such a thought. They were powerless to pacify the soul under a sense of its sin, and to remove the Divine displeasure: “They could not make him that did the service

* Heb. x. 4.

perfect, as pertaining to the conscience."* But the whole of this strange, bloody ritual receives at once a wondrous significance, when we connect it with more precious blood, and a more precious Life;—with the imputation of our guilt to the Lamb of God—"Christ our Passover sacrificed FOR US."†

II. Let us pass from the typical, to the PROPHETICAL testimony, on the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer. Two among several other passages may suffice.

The first, is the 53d chapter of Isaiah ; that wonderful Old Testament picture of the Saviour's humiliation. Again and again is the truth we are now unfolding there brought prominently before us ;—that the Lord Jesus *took our sins actually upon Him*,—that He suffered *in our room and stead*.

Ver. 4, "Surely He hath *borne* our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

* Heb. ix. 9.

† 1 Cor. v. 7.

Ver. 5, "But He was wounded *for* our transgressions, He was bruised *for* our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, *and with His stripes we are healed.*"

Ver. 6, "The Lord hath *laid upon Him* the *iniquity* of us all."

Ver. 8, "For the *transgression* of *My people* was He stricken." "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, *for He shall bear their iniquities.*"

Ver. 12, "And He was numbered *with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many.*"

What could be more explicit than these varied statements?—that He who rose up before the Seer's vision as "the Man of Sorrows," was really the Substitute of the guilty; enduring the stripes that were due to us—carrying the load of sin *we* should have borne. Though sinless Himself, yet, as the Vicar of His people—enrolled—"numbered, among transgressors."

The other prophetic passage we may cite in confirmation of the doctrine, is from the Book of Daniel. That Prophet, speaking in the most

explicit and indubitable language of "Messiah the Prince," who was "to finish (the) transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness," adds, "And after threescore and two weeks (of years) shall Messiah be cut off" (by death), "*but not for Himself.*"* He was to suffer, but it was for no sin of His own, for no personal demerit. He was to finish the transgression of His people, to discharge their debt, by the offering of Himself: and the Prophet immediately adds, that having thus completed His atoning work, "In the midst of the week, He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."† The substance having been revealed, the shadows melt away. The Divine Antitype being come,—the great Antitypical Sacrifice being offered, the ceremonial ritual is abrogated; all other sacrifices and oblations are abolished.

* Dan. ix. 26.

† Dan. ix. 27.

III. We proceed now to advert to the APOSTOLIC testimonies in support of this same cardinal truth. In doing so, we shall attempt little more than simply quote a few appropriate verses, in themselves so clear and explicit as to require no comment. Observe, however, the force of the preposition "*for*," as denoting *substitution*, which occurs in most of them. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died FOR the ungodly."* "He was made sin FOR us, who knew no sin."† "Made a curse FOR us."‡ "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up FOR us all."§ "He was delivered FOR our offences."|| "Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many."¶ "Who gave Himself FOR us."** "He gave Himself FOR us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."†† "Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the just FOR the unjust, that He might bring us to God."‡‡ "Who loved us, and gave Himself FOR

* Rom. v. 6.

§ Rom. viii. 32.

** Titus ii. 14.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

|| Rom. iv. 25.

†† Ephes. v. 2.

‡ Gal. iii. 13.

¶ Heb. ix. 28.

‡‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.”*
 “Now once in the end of the world hath He
 appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of
 Himself.”† “Who His own self bare our sins in
 His own body on the tree. . . . By whose stripes
 we are healed.”‡

And if we ascend from the testimony of
 the Church on earth, to that of the Church
 glorified in Heaven, it is the same. “Thou
 hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.”§ “To
 Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins
 in His own blood.” ||

If language have any meaning, these and
 other passages are surely conclusive. We re-
 peat, the preposition so often employed in these
 verses, undoubtedly supposes and implies *sub-*
stitution—one put in the place or room of
 another. “Christ died FOR us;”—not as the
 Socinians say, that He died for our good, for
 our advantage; not that He became incarnate
 merely to be the Revealer of the Father’s

* Titus ii. 14.

† Heb. ix. 26.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

§ Rev. v. 9.

|| Rev. i. 5.

love, a spotless Example, the Ideal of perfect humanity (though this, as we shall subsequently show, was included as a subordinate object in the divine mission); neither that His sufferings are merely to be regarded in the light of "afflictions" or "calamities," similar to what His people are often called upon to undergo in this life; but, He came as the law-fulfiller—the sin-bearer. Sin and guilt were not only in a figurative, but in a literal sense laid upon Him. Take away this feature in the doing and dying of Jesus, and the Incarnation is shorn of its glory; the whole typical economy becomes an enigma. It resolves itself into a mysterious, incomprehensible, wasteful expenditure of blood and animal suffering; and the Apostolic writings become a mass of inconclusive reasoning. But, accept the view of Christ as a vicarious Sacrifice, a real Substitute for human guilt, dying in the stead of transgressors, then the whole mystery is solved. Then there is a tongue put in every bleeding wound of every expiring victim;—a halo encircles the fire

and smoke ascending from every altar. These proclaim in awful, but significant symbolism, what He to whom they pointed expressed in His own simple utterance, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, *and to give His life a ransom for many.*"*

We may conclude, by refuting one false and erroneous deduction with which some have ventured to charge this doctrine, viz., that it is derogatory to the benevolence and beneficence of God; that it represents Him in the unamiable and unloving light of a rigorous Exactor, who requires His wrath to be appeased by the blood of an innocent Sufferer:—nay, further, that as the natural consequence of entertaining such a dogma, our affections are necessarily transferred from the exacting inexorable Lawgiver, to Him who, by His voluntary anguish and death, has effected the reconciliation. Such repulsive views of the Divine Being, however,

* Mark x. 45.

are false and gratuitous assumptions, containing an utter perversion of Catholic teaching and Scripture language.

What *is* the true Bible representation? God is there brought before us, as we have already seen, infinitely Holy—immaculately Righteous—inviolably Faithful and Just;—His law uncompromising in its demands, rigidly exacting in its penalties. This Almighty Being is represented, moreover, as *requiring* an adequate sacrifice and satisfaction;—nay, in a bold figure, as summoning the sword of Justice to “awake against the Man who is His fellow.” But, if we draw aside the veil, and look still farther into the secrets of the Divine counsels, we shall see that the motive-principle of all was the Father’s divine compassion and mercy. It was not the substitution of the Great Sacrifice that was the cause of God’s love to our world. That love not only existed antecedently in the Divine mind, but it was that infinite Love which prompted and devised the amazing plan of redemption. “GO

so loved the world”*—“GOD commendeth *His love*.”† GOD “spared not His own Son.”‡ It was His originating love which provided the Lamb for the burnt-offering. The true method, therefore, of viewing the Atonement of Calvary is to regard it, from first to last, as a stupendous plan of Divine Sovereign Grace and Mercy exercised in consistence with Justice and Truth—a rainbow, indeed, seen with a dark background of suffering and wrath, but in whose blended tints and colours “mercy rejoices over judgment.”

Reader, are you able fully to accept—nay, to rejoice in this stupendous doctrine, and by faith to appropriate its sublime verities? to view it, not as a beautiful figure, a typical fiction, but as a sober reality, denoting and asserting a veritable transference of your guilt to the Lamb of God: a glorious crevice in the Rock of Ages, in which you may fold

* John iii. 16.

† Rom. v. 8.

‡ Rom. viii. 32.

your wings and sink to rest as you sing, "He loved me, and gave Himself FOR *me*!" Rejoice, too, that that transference *has* taken place; the negotiation is completed, the Substitute has been provided, the ransom *has* been paid. It is not a matter which now remains in suspense and unaccomplished. Many on earth have noble and lofty intentions which have never been fulfilled. Many a high enterprise has been excogitated; but the enthusiasm wears past, the opportunity is lost, or the resolve is strangled at the birth. Not so this great salvation. What Christ undertook He has performed. He does not utter the unavailing soliloquy and lament in His heavenly palace, over an apostate world, which David did on the occasion of the death of his ruined child, "Would God I had died for thee." He *has* died; He *has* fulfilled His covenant-pledge as our Surety. Our mortgaged inheritance *has* been recovered. The prophetic words have become now the utterance of an historic fact,—He HAS seen of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied!



Well do we know that the doctrine we have now been considering, is in these modern times disliked by many; by not a few rejected. We do not hear it enunciated in our systems of theology, nor proclaimed in our pulpits, as its importance demands. Many prefer coming with Cain's bloodless offerings of thanksgiving (the deist sacrifice) rather than, like Abel, bringing the bleating victim from his fold. They are willing to behold Christ the Son, but not Christ "the Lamb of God." They build the temple, but they disown the altar. Believer, be it yours ever to look to the lintels and door-posts sprinkled with blood. Clasp this glorious truth to your heart of hearts—Christ your Substitute. All *He* did, reckon as having been done by you. When He was prostrated on the cold earth in His soul-struggle in Gethsemane, or when He trod the blood-stained path along the dolorous way, or when He uttered the Eloi-cry on the cross,—think, it was *your* sins that were draining these drops of anguish, and extracting these strong cryings, and pleadings, and tears.

Blood is death ; and if by faith you be sprinkled with the sacred token, you are reckoned to have died *in the Surety*. When He gave His precious peerless life, it was equivalent to your giving yours. Be assured that this is the only view of the death of Jesus that will stand the test of scrutiny of Scripture ; or that, as a strong and all-sufficient rock-cleft, will be able to ensure solid and satisfying peace in believing. It is not the philosophic divinity which consists in the apotheosis of virtue—it is not eliminating these peculiar doctrines of the cross, and substituting cold negations, that will pacify consciences.

“ Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Mid flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy I shall lift up my head.

“ When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
This all my hope, this all my plea,
That Jesus lived and died for me.”

Let what will form your alone stable and satisfying trust then, be the ground of your hope and confidence now. Accept Him,

hesitatingly, as your Surety-Saviour, "the end of the law for righteousness." See how He has "blotted out the handwriting that was against you, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." See how God, the injured Creditor, has cancelled your obligations. Never again, in point of law, can your legion-sins appear;—they are obliterated for ever. Let the mightiest angel in heaven be delegated to go in quest of these sins! Let him roam creation! Let him search every corner of the earth, and every cavern of old ocean. He will come back from the mission with the tidings—"The iniquity of Israel is sought for, and there is none; and the sins of Judah, and they are not found."* "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."†

* Jer. l. 20.

† Ps. ciii. 12.

Christ the Propitiation.

"And they shall make an ark of shittim-wood. . . . And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. . . . And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony."—*Ex.* xxv. 10, 11, 21, 22.

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament."—*Rev.* xi. 19.

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."—*John* i. 29.

"WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD."—*Rom.* iii. 25.

"Happy is he alone, to whom the Lord imputeth not transgression: to have Him propitious to me against whom alone I have sinned. When my soul is troubled with the view of her sinfulness, I look at Thy mercy, and am refreshed."—*St Bernard*, 1123.

"The Everlasting God be praised! We have a remedy and a sure helper. Christ the Son of the living God hath fulfilled the law for us, to deliver us from sin."—*Latimer*, A.D. 1546.

"Under this shadow, O my soul, refresh thyself. If thy sins fear the hand of justice, behold thy sanctuary; if thy offences tremble before the Judge, behold thy Advocate; if thy creditor threaten a prison, behold thy bail: behold the Lamb of God, that hath taken thy sins from thee."—*Francis Quarles*, A.D. 1592.

"Sprinkled with His atoning blood,
Safely before our God we stand;
As in the Rock the Prophet stood,
Beneath His shadowing hand."—*Keble*.

V.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD."—Rom. iii. 25.

A SIMILAR cleft in the same Great Rock—a kindred subject to that which it was our endeavour to unfold in the preceding chapter, invites our thoughts in the present. It were easy, indeed, to limit ourselves to a cursory examination of these views of sacrifice and oblation in the outer court of the Earthly, ere we pass within the veil of the Heavenly Temple, with its redeemed worshippers and ministering seraphim. But we deem it needful, in the first instance, to have our confidence well assured on the procuring cause of all that wealth of present privilege and future bliss: to see and

acknowledge the Divine necessity there was, in bringing many sons unto glory, that the Captain of their salvation be made perfect through suffering. Unless the Rock had been "stricken," "smitten of God," there could have been no clefts in it. Take away the sacrificial element from the Incarnation of the Redeemer, and you sweep from beneath the feet every stable and reliable ground of confidence and safety. Let others speak slightly and disparagingly of "dead dogma," and affect the possession of breadth and liberality of sentiment in rejecting with a sneer what they presume to call "special theories of atonement." Be it ours rather, with humble reliance on the teaching of that Spirit promised to "guide into all truth," to have our faith on such great foundation verities "grounded and settled ;" and conscious of having attained a sure footing on what cannot be shaken, to be able to say, in the simple couplet of the well-known hymn—

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is shifting sand."

Once more, then, under another form, let our thoughts revert to the central, kernel doctrine of our most holy faith, — CHRIST THE PROPITIATION, "Whom God hath set forth to be" (not merely the Ideal of human perfection, the Manifestation of a life of stainless virtue and sublime self-sacrifice, but) "a *Propitiation* through faith in His blood."

That word "Propitiation" occurs only three times in the New Testament: in the present passage of St Paul's Roman Epistle, and twice in the Epistles of St John. The original word (*ἱλαστηριον*), as is well known, refers to the lid of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle or Temple. It is the same expression which is found in the ninth chapter of Hebrews, and there rendered "mercy-seat" — "The Cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat;" or as it is more faithfully, perhaps, translated in most of the old versions of the English Bible by the word

propitiatory.* This covering of the ark was made of fragrant *shittim-wood*. Its lining and corner pieces were of pure beaten gold. It was protected by the overshadowing wings of the *Urimim*: while the *Shekinah*, or symbol of the Divine Presence, in its awful cloudy splendor, rested between. Once every year (on the Great Day of Atonement) the Jewish High Priest entered the Holiest of all. The warm blood of the slain victim, sprinkled on the "Propitiatory," flowed down on the pavement, where he stood as the officiating representative of the nation. The root word (the verb) from which the term Propitiation in the original is derived signifies "to appease wrath," "to turn away anger." It speaks of an offence, and an offender and the typical "Propitiatory" comes as a shield or guard, between the offender on the one hand and the Being offended on the other. It is scarcely needful to pause, in order to explain the

* In the Tyndale version, the words are rendered, "Whom God hath made a seat of mercy;" in the Geneva, "Whom God hath set forth to be a *pacification*."—See *Bagster's Hexapla*.

expressive symbol; and how the Israelitish type is fulfilled and illustrated in the person and official work of the Divine Antitype. As we found in the previous chapter, God's law has been dishonoured, its sacredness violated, its penalties incurred. Let us not be misunderstood. We must fastidiously guard, as most derogatory to His glory, against the use of language that would, by remotest implication, impute to the Great Supreme anything analogous to those vindictive passions resident in the human bosom. He is "offended," because of the infinite holiness and rectitude of His nature. He must, as a moral Governor, uphold intact and without compromise, every jot and tittle of His law, and maintain the honour and majesty of His Throne. His justice and righteousness dare not be impeached in the eyes of the other sections of His vast empire.

Darius the King, we read, made a decree, and set his royal seal to it. It led to the inevitable destruction of an innocent man. That night, sleep was banished from the royal pillow;

—no sound of harp or flute or dulcimer heard, during those gloomy watches, within palace walls. He had “laboured until the going down of the sun to deliver Daniel;” but in vain. Why in vain? Why might not Eastern despot, whose will was law, have at once ordered the release of the captive Jew? Nay, “Know, O King, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the King establisheth, may be changed.”** far higher, loftier, more solemn sense is this of Him by whom kings reign. The statutes of the Eternal are unchangeable. “A man’s heart deviseth his (*own*) way,”† but “the counsel of the Lord, *that* shall stand.”‡ The pillars of the Throne have immutability to rest upon; “though hand join in hand, the wicked shall be unpunished.”§

But the blood of the Great Surety has been shed; the Lamb for the burnt-offering has been immolated; the Veil is rent in twain; the

* Dan. vi. 15.

† Prov. xvi. 9.

‡ Prov. xix. 21.

§ Prov. xi. 21.

phetic hymn of the angels at Messiah's birth has had its exalted strains fulfilled—while glory has been secured to God in the highest, peace has been proclaimed on earth, and goodwill to men.* And now, as the sinner stands, like the High Priest of old, in front of the Mercy-seat, we see, significantly symbolised, at once the offence, the offender, and the Great Propitiation. Inside the ark were deposited, among other sacred things, the two tables of stone, on which are inscribed the words of the Eternal decalogue. That law demands satisfaction. Had it not been for the lid of which we have just spoken, these imprisoned commandments would leap like fiery swords from their scabbards, and mingle the worshipper's blood with his sacrifices. Like a shield, however, the Propitiatory intervenes! Even in its material adornments it was typical; the shittim-wood was emblematic of the real humanity of the Divine Propitiator; moreover, the *fragrant* shittim-wood pointed significantly

* Luke ii. 14.

to His purity and sinlessness ; while the golden border and golden clasps at the corners, with equal impressiveness symbolised His Deity ;—the Deity and Humanity conjoined, but not blended or intermixed. Behold, then, we repeat, the sinner within that awful sanctuary ;—the law unabrogated, unrepealed, uttering its denunciation —“The soul that sinneth, it must die!” The Cherubim bending over the mercy-seat, appear, as they point to its symbolic covering, to proclaim the words which head this chapter—“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation !” While the worshipper, through his representative, drawing nigh with the blood in his hand—sprinkling it *above* the mercy-seat, and *before* the mercy-seat, till the purple stream falls on the floor, prefers the plea as he points to the Propitiatory—“Behold our shield, look on the face of Thine anointed.”* Or, again, in still more impressive words—“God be merciful to me a sinner.”† We say, in more impressive words ; for

*Ps. lxxxiv. 9.

† Luke xviii. 13.

it is remarkable and well worthy of note, that in this prayer of the Publican, the verb translated "be merciful" corresponds with the Greek for "propitiation."* "Be merciful," he cries; but it is mercy by *sacrifice*; it is mercy through the atoning blood of the Great Surety. Blessed meeting-place between offending man and an offended God! If we can venture for a moment to personify the attribute of JUSTICE, we see her clad in vestments of stainless purity, with the sword in one hand and the balances of equity in the other. As we follow her within the Veil, we behold her standing by the Propitiatory with sheathed weapon, side by side with *Mercy*. We can hear her, within the very shadow of the decalogue, uttering the glorious words—"The Just God, yet the Saviour;" "the Just, yet the Justifier:"—aye singing in concert the special song of the sister attribute, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His MERCY endureth for ever!"

* The one is *ἰλαστήριον*, the other *ἰλασθῆναι*.

Ere we close, let us note the special declaration made by the apostle regarding this divine Propitiation, "Whom God hath *set forth*:" a word which in the original means "set publicly apart," "manifested publicly for some great end or object." There are many ways which will suggest themselves, in which the Eternal Father, the Originator of the scheme of Redeeming Grace, has "set forth" the Son of His love, as Mediator and Surety for the fallen.

He was set forth from all Eternity in the divine counsels. In the archives of Heaven His name and purpose were recorded:—"In the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God."* He was set forth in the very hour of the Fall, in the first promise of Redemption; as well as in the "coats of skin" of the first sacrifices, with which the guilty pair covered their nakedness.† He was set forth in Noah's altar-fires on Ararat; in the glorious tints of His rainbow, and in the Covenant of

* Heb. x. 7.

† Gen. iii. 21.

which it was the symbol.* He was set forth in the Patriarchal Church, in Abraham's offering on Mount Moriah, and in Jacob's ladder at Bethel.† In the Mosaic Church, in the sprinkling of the lintels and doorposts:‡ in the smitten rock and brazen serpent.§ He was set forth, more fully still, in that vast and complicated ceremonial, upon every part of which is significantly inscribed "Not without blood,"—"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."|| He was set forth in the Prophetic Church, from Jacob's earliest prophecy of the Shiloh,¶ and Balaam's of the Star,** to Malachi's last glowing figure of the Sun of righteousness.†† And then, when the fullness of time came, He was more peculiarly 'manifested.' The morning stars, and the sons of God, that had sung responsive their jubilant anthem at creation's birth, again meet to celebrate in joyous strains the birth hour of an Incarnate Deity!‡‡ The Shepherds of Bethlehem,

* Gen. ix. 13.

† Gen. xxii.

‡ Gen. xxviii. 10.

§ Exod. xii. 22.

|| Rev. xiii. 8.

¶ Gen. xlix. 10.

** Num. xxiv. 17.

†† Mal. iv. 2.

‡‡ Luke ii. 13.

and the Wise Men of Arabia (the representative Jew and Gentile, the representative rich and poor), gather around His cradle, not in a palace, but at a manger, to sing 'Glory to the newborn King.'* Again and again, and with ever-growing publicity, was He manifested in the eyes of His Church. At His baptism, He received (as vicegerent, or substitute,) a sinner's rite at a sinner's hands, accompanied with the proclamation from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."† In His transfiguration, He was set forth, indeed, in the first instance, in the majesty of His Godhead, robed in the Shekinah cloud—the "white and glistening" raiment: delegates from heaven and earth met to do Him homage. But even in that scene of transcendent brightness, it is as the *Propitiation* He appears; for it is a memorable feature in the transaction, that these lofty messengers from the Church triumphant, in their converse with the members of the Church

* Luke ii. 16; Matt. ii. 11.

† Matt. iii. 16, 17.

militant, talk, not of His supreme dignity, nor of the reversionary and resultant glory of His Messiahship, but “they spake of the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem.”* As the closing scenes of His public ministry thicken upon us, how pre-eminently (almost exclusively) is it as the *Propitiation* He is revealed. Gethsemane, the Judgment-Hall, the house of Caia-phas, the dolorous way, the awful culminating scene, when, raised above the ground, He hung on the cross an ignominious spectacle; when Jew and Gentile exhausted their weapons of ruffianly taunt and mockery, with scourge, and nail, spear, and thorn; and when, after man had done his worst, over and above all, the cry was heard from the Lord of Hosts, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd!” It is in the same light (as the Great Sacrifice and Oblation—the Satisfaction for His people’s sins), He has been set forth for the last eighteen centuries in His own appointed ordinances;—specially in the proclamation of His

* Luke ix. 31.

glorious Gospel, and in His great memory with its simple yet significant common symbols. He is set forth in the varied experiences of His people, in their every season of exigency and trial. These are too numerous to admit of being specified. At no time is His presence and grace more signally experienced and realised than at the hour of death. He is then, looking to the golden 'shield' of the covenant-Ark, that His spiritual Israel, that old band of wilderness warriors, pass bravely and brave-hearted through the border of the world to the shores of the heavenly Canaan. The long assurance uttered 3000 years ago, but none of its comfort, "Behold the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth pass before you into Jordan!"* In one of his last visions, the beloved disciple beheld "the temple of God," and "the Ark of his testament." What was this, but the symbolical disclosure of the Great Propitiation; as He was witness

* Josh. iii. 11.

† Rev. xi. 19.

the dying martyr Stephen, and by triumphing multitudes in subsequent ages at a similar hour? "I see Heaven opened, and *Jesus* standing at the right hand of God."* A grander and sublimer revealing of His Person and dignity (afterwards to be considered), will take place on the day of the "manifestation of the sons of God,"—emphatically designated "the day of His appearing;" when still, as the Son of Man, seated on His Throne of Glory, "every eye shall see Him."† He will be set forth finally, as we shall come also more particularly to note, through all Eternity, in the midst of His Church triumphant; still as the *Propitiation*; wearing the mysterious memorials of suffering in the blessed world where suffering is unknown: while this is to form the eternal hymn and ascription of His ransomed—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,

* Acts vii. 56.

† Rev. i. 7.

for Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood!"*

On a review of these imperfect reflections, are any prompted to ask the urgent question—"How am I to obtain the shelter of such a Rock-cleft as this? How can I procure access and welcome to the true Mercy-seat?" There are no barriers of exclusion. The veil is rent; the approach is free; the Propitiation is made yours, "*through faith in His blood.*" How many among the votaries of a false and spurious Christianity, are looking to Christ through material relics—pieces of the so-called true cross, fragments of the spear or thorn-crown, or the seamless robe! We are called to look "*through faith.*" How many more are groping their way to Him through propitiations of their own: penances, and prayers, and fastings, and flagellations. The propitiation is completed: "Whom God *hath* set forth." If the Jewish Hierarch, as he stood at the mercy-seat, instead of sprinkling the

* Rev. v. 12; iv. 9.

blood, had stripped the jewels from breastplate and mitre, and flung them on the sacred chest, what would all have availed? *Nothing*. There was but *one* offering efficacious there: an offering composed not of 'pearls from the ocean, or gold from the mine;'—"When *I see* THE BLOOD *I will pass over you*."* Significant testimony to the alone method by which pardon and peace are procured, through the atoning work of the Great Antitype, "the one true, perfect, and all-sufficient oblation!"†

* Exod. xii. 13.

† It is beautiful and instructive to note, how a doctrine, often spurned and repudiated by the pride of the natural heart, is accepted and gloried in by those of highest intellect who are "taught of God." Take the case of one of the most eminent men of this century, whom to know, as the writer, in common with thousands, can testify, was to revere and love,—the late distinguished Sir James Simpson, M.D. His biographer again and again notes how he rendered his testimony with all his heart, "to the remission of sins by the blood of Christ—very God—very man—the substitute and surety for sinners" (p. 408). When the shadow of a heavy family bereavement had just fallen on him, he thus writes, in communicating the event to his son: "You and I and all of us have no friend whom we can always trust and always rely upon, but Jesus, and in the infinitude of His love He is now stretching out to us His *pierced* hands, asking us to fly into His brotherly arms for protection and safety for

Oh, believer, who art in this cleft of the Rock exult in your inviolable security! Sheltered therein, the curses of the law are made impotent. As the angel came down by night to the camp of the Assyrians, and strewed the Judean plain with their corpses, rendering every weapon

both time and eternity." From his deathbed he writes—"My sole and whole trust is in the love and work of Christ, as my *all sufficient sin-bearer and Saviour*." As the last moments were approaching, "the hymn," he said, "expresses my thoughts—

‘Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me.’

I so like that hymn." . . . "What a wonderful redemption this is! Christ's blood can float a cork or a man of war. I can bear every one to heaven." In an earlier letter, using the metaphor so dear to many, "I know that you will earnestly pray to Christ to keep the feet of all of us firmly fixed on the Rock of Ages." His biographer, in a note, quotes a deathbed remark made by another man of note, who had planted his foot on the same Rock (the late Lord Lyndhurst)—"I often wondered what good men meant when they spoke so much about 'the Blood. I see it all now. It is just substitution.'" We may add a similar well-accredited testimony to the same truth from humbler lips. A dying soldier, in one of the world's great recent wars, was heard to say, "Blood, blood, blood!" "A clergyman," says the narrator, "thinking that the scenes of bloodshed he had recently witnessed were troubling his mind, went to him to lead his thoughts to brighter themes. 'I was not thinking of the battle-field,' said he, 'but of the blood of Jesus, which has covered all my sins.'"

powerless which the dead warriors grasped in their hands; so has the great Angel of the Covenant—the true “Prince who standeth for the children of His people”—descended in the deep night of the world’s darkness, and made the arm of the law, with all its denunciations, incapable of inflicting so much as one wound. The efficacy of the blood of Christ is inexhaustible. Revelation unfolds 144,000, with lustrous robes, washed and made white in it; and still the Propitiation is “set forth;” still the way into the Holiest and to acceptance is open. Come, approach it, with this one only passport to pardon and forgiveness in your hand. See the old, but ever-binding and obligatory Tables of Sinai’s law, screened out of sight by the intervening barrier;—hidden, as a covenant of works, by the better work of Jesus. God hath set *Him* forth as a Propitiatory. He (the true ‘shield, and lifter-up of thy head’), “stands between the living and the dead, and the plague is stayed!”

Christ the Manifestation of the Father.

- "And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee. . . . And He said, Thou canst not see My face : for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon rock. And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by."—*Exod. xxxiii. 18-22.*
- "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us."—*Matt. i. 23.*
- "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."—*Matt. xi. 27.*
- "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father ?"—*John xiv. 8, 9.*
- "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world."—*John xvii. 6.*
- "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—*2 Cor. iv. 6.*
- "This is the true God and eternal life."—*1 John v. 20.*
- "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."—*Col. ii. 9.*
- "WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD."—*Col. i. 15.*

"God is not called the Father of Vengeance, but the FATHER OF MERCIES."—*St Bernard, 1123.*

"Let us accustom ourselves more and more profoundly to sink into the blessed mystery of our most holy faith ; so that we may correct all transcendental, vague thoughts about God, by setting Christ at once before our eyes. . . . He is the Visibility of the Invisible, as far as, and in such way, as that may be seen. Even in the heavenly 'beholding' throughout Eternity, there will be no showing of the Father out of and apart from Him."—*Stier.*

VI.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him."

"WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD."

—Col. 1. 15.

A NEW and most blessed Rock-cleft is now to engage our thoughts. In the two preceding chapters, we have endeavoured to extract grounds of confidence and trust from the contemplation of Christ as the Surety-Substitute, and as the Propitiation for the sins of the world. In doing so, it behoved us to dwell on the character of the Supreme Being as a Moral Governor,—the Holy, the Righteous, the Just, the True,—the inflexible Guardian and Dispenser of Laws based upon principles of everlasting rectitude, demanding the payment of penalties annexed to transgression. But having laid this broad and needful foundation ; beholding every attribute of the

Divine nature magnified and made honourable in the Cross of the Divine Sufferer,—bringing a revenue of glory to God, and of blessing to the human race; we shall now proceed, in the light of that Cross, to consider a new revelation of the Almighty. We have pondered Jehovah's character as Lawgiver and Judge, we are now to regard Him manifested in Christ, in His benignant, paternal character as a Father.

It is worthy of remembrance, as appropriate alike to the present theme, and to the title of this volume, that when God, in long ages preceding the Incarnation, made a revelation of Himself to Moses, it was in reply to the request of the Lawgiver (a request which embodies the urgent query of humanity), "I beseech thee show me Thy glory:" and, as if to shadow forth the great mystery of a coming dispensation, the Divine Being "set him IN THE CLEFTS OF A ROCK, and made all His glory to pass before him." As the mystic, undefined Presence of the Great I AM, swept by the face of that mountain watch-tower—nature's shrine; the proclama-

tion of the Sacred Name was sounded in the listener's ears. But what was the Revelation? Not, God, awful and terrible, enshrined in the blackness and darkness, the lightnings and tempests, which so lately played on the mountain-top frowning over His servant's head;—but words composed of letters as if written in bright sunbeam—"The Lord, the Lord God, *merciful* and *gracious*."* It is this typical vision of Moses, fulfilled and realised in the Person of the adorable Antitype, which is to occupy our contemplation in the present chapter. We are invited to enter "the Clefts of the Rock" to behold the glory of Jehovah. But, as in the case of the Jewish Lawgiver, it is to have our fears calmed and our trust established, by an apocalypse, not of majesty or terror, but of ineffable paternal love.

WHAT IS GOD? The foundation truth of all theology, and indeed of all thought, has been the perplexing problem of every age. Who is

* Exod. xxxiv. 6.

He? What is His character? What are His personal relations to Him and His to me? Nature contributes her own quota to the solution of the question. This invisible One visibly imaged and understood in "the things He has made." Wondrous and diversified are the illustrated pages of that Great book in showing forth His praise. These are formed of wood and mountain, lake and river; of vernal sky and summer verdure; of virgin morning, noontide brightness, dewy eve; night with her sable mantle woven with gems, the silent pageantry of moon and stars; the song of birds in the groves, the music of streams, the hues of flowers spread in profusion over hill and dale, the solemn character of winds "discovering the forests," the many voices of the ceaseless sea. And not only so; but as we gaze on this beautiful world-temple, full of beneficent agencies and gracious provision: what are all such combined, but endless affirmations of the wisdom and power, the graciousness and love, of the Omnipotent Framer and Sustainer. In this Temple doth every one an

every thing speak of the glory of His natural perfections. And yet, the witness so eloquent in proclaiming and authenticating His Being, pronounces at best only a partial deliverance on His other moral attributes. Farther, the choir of nature's vast shrine is not always in harmony. Its notes are at times grating and dissonant. These bright skies have, ever and anon, their dark clouds and deep-voiced thunders. These winds at times revel with their wild music over devastated fields or shipwrecked crews. That air which wafts the perfume of flowers, and transmits the sweet note of birds, is at times the highway of the noisome pestilence and the destruction that wasteth at noonday. The pang of suffering, the wail of death, the corruption of the sepulchre, refuse to countersign the testimony otherwise borne to a God all-love. Nay, rather, in a thousand ways, do they indicate or assert the existence of estrangement between the Creator and the creature. With these anomalies—these mysterious phenomena, alike in the material and the moral world, which of us,

trusting alone to the light of nature, but would be forced to cry out in bewilderment, "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself?"

When we turn from nature to other solutions, the darkness and perplexity only seem to thicken and deepen around us. We go in vain to heathen philosophers and their systems; and that, too, at the most refined era of the world, when the human intellect was under the most favourable conditions to grope its way to the highest spiritual verities. The brain which excogitated in poetry the most bewitching creations of human fancy, or which compiled massive codes of wisdom which have guided and moulded modern intellect and polity, manifested only failure here. The chisel which could embody its thoughts in breathing marble, and bequeath its wondrous conceptions as heirlooms to admiring ages alike in sculpture and architecture, could, in its conceptions of the Invisible Spirit, only carve the confession of its powerlessness on an Attic pedestal, "To the unknown God!" We go to the temples of heathen wor-

ship; with rare exceptions, they have a still gloomier and more perplexing response, in their bloody shambles, and reeking altars, and groaning victims. Whether it be the Moloch of Moab, or the Baal and Ashtaroth of Phœnicia; or Jove enthroned as King in Greek and Roman Pantheon, grasping Olympian thunderbolts; or Kali and Vishnu of Hindooism, or Thor and Odin of Scandinavia; we have, substantially, the same expression of their conceptions of the mysterious Invisible Abstraction worshipped as God :—a Great Being, or Beings, with a reserve of power, absolute in their decrees, vindictive and implacable, the object of dread and dismay; few weapons in their infinite armoury but what are whetted for retributive vengeance. Those heathen votaries, groping after the knowledge of a Supreme Ruler, had “neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape;” and their crude guesses at the awful reality, moulded in imagination a living embodiment of terror, to whom judgment was no strange work. Or even, if we turn (where we might *have expected* a more reliable and

authoritative interpretation of the Oracle)—to the Jewish "*El Shaddai*," "*Jehovah*," or "*Elohim*,"—was not this Infinite One invested, even by them, with similar awe? Is He not addressed by prophets, and sung of by psalmists, as "terrible in His holy places,"* "The Great and Terrible,"† "The Jealous;" with "wrath kindled,"‡ "The fiery stream going forth before Him;"§ "Bowing the heavens, and coming down, with darkness under His feet;" sending avenging angels to the earth, to smite with sword and pestilence:—this the invocation of His worshippers, "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble."|| We listen to one revelation of Himself, that He dwells "in the thick darkness."¶ A prior one, on that thick darkness being for the moment unrolled, was in "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more."** They beheld Him and feared Him, as "the

* Ps. lxxviii. 35.

§ Ps. xviii. 9.

† Ps. xcix. 3.

|| Ps. xcix. 1.

** Heb. xii. 19.

‡ Exod. xxxiv. 14.

¶ 2 Chron. vi. 1.

Lord of hosts." At the march of this great God of armies, "the earth shook, the heavens dropped."* "A fire goeth before Him and burneth up His enemies round about: His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."† "Say unto God, how terrible art Thou in Thy works! through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee."‡ Even when we turn to the aid given to their conceptions of the Divine Personality, a mystic cloud covered the mercy-seat of their Temple, shrouding it from every eye save one, and that one could dare approach it only with blood. Well might St Paul call this economy of the Theocratic nation, by the name of "the ministration of condemnation."§ A favoured few of the favoured people had indeed penetrated that darkness. After the wind and

* Ps. lxxviii. 8.

† Ps. lxxvi. 3.

‡ Ps. xcvi. 3-5.

§ 2 Cor. iii. 9.

earthquake and fire, they had heard "a still, small voice," and had been taught to sing, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God,"* "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord,"† "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him,"‡ "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."§ Through the discourses of their Prophets, and the hymns of their Psalmists, many had groped their way to some dim apprehensions of the Divine Fatherhood. Still, to the mass of the Jewish nation He was the Great Incomprehensible; answering them, as He did Job, "out of the whirlwind;" leading them to endorse the utterance of one of the friends of the same Patriarch, "Canst thou by searching find out God?"|| With many, moreover, who live under a better and brighter dispensation, are there not similar distorted views entertained of the nature of Jehovah? They think of Him as a mighty Architect, who has

* Ps. cxxxix. 17.

† Ps. xxxiv. 2.

‡ Ps. xxxiv. 8.

§ Ps. cvi. 1.

|| Job xi. 7.

piled infinite space with His handiwork;—omnipotent, omniscient;—awful in His holiness, inexorable in His justice, implacable in His vengeance. They have fully apprehended the partial revelation of Him as the punisher of sin, but they have failed to enter the “cleft” of the true Rock, and to gaze on the glorious complement of His character, as the Gracious and Merciful, the Father and the Friend. We repeat, that it is when within these clefts of the Rock of Ages, that latter and more gracious revelation, as in the case of Moses, is vouchsafed. The *paternal* relation of Jehovah to His people is manifested in the Person of Him who came to our world the Incarnation of the Divine Spirituality, the Image and Representative of this Invisible God—the unveiler of the essential perfections of Deity. “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* He is Himself the articulate answer to the query of His impatient disciple, “Lord, show us *the Father*, and it

* Col. ii. 9.

sufficeth us"—“He that hath seen *me*,” was reply, “hath seen the Father.”* As there has been a patriarchal, a legal, an angelic, a prophetic dispensation,—so now Christ comes as founder and exponent of a *filial* one. To the significant opening words of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews (not as they are rendered in our version, but as they have been rendered in the full force of the original), “(who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto *us* by a Son.”† “In creation,” says a writer, “He is a God above us; in the law He is a God against us; but in the Gospel He is Immanuel, a God with us, a God like us, a God for us.”

Most delightful surely and comforting is this theme of contemplation—Christ the revealer of the Father. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of

* John xiv. 8.

† Heb. i. 1.

Father, full of grace and truth.”* Well may He be designated by this appropriate term. For just as ‘words’ are the outward audible expression of silent invisible thought, so Christ is the expression of the Invisible God—the utterance and embodiment in human shape, of Him who revealed Himself in the dimness of an earlier dispensation as “secret,” “wonderful,” “incomprehensible.” As the natural eye is dazzled by looking on the material sun in his noon-day splendour, and requires some medium through which to gaze on his brightness ; so, no man can see the face, or comprehend the character of God, but through the Divine medium who came to our earth,—the reflected “brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person.”† “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”‡ The glorious train of the Divine attributes descended and filled the Temple of His body, and over the portico of

* John i. 14.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ John i. 18.

that Temple stands inscribed in unmistakeable characters, "*God is love.*" The false conceptions of Him, as a Being dwelling in thick darkness, ought to be for ever dispelled. What says the Apostle, as he points to Him who is "light, and with whom is no darkness at all?" "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."^{*}

But this brings us more specifically to inquire, What *is* the character of this Great God, as manifested and reflected in the Son of His love?

We have only to track the divine footsteps of the Redeemer on earth, and (to use the Apostle's simile), there to behold "as in a glass" or mirror "the glory of the Lord." What do we see? A Being, indeed, of infinite holiness—unsparing and uncompromising in His rebuke of iniquity, sternly denouncing sin in all its forms, driving

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

with a scourge the sacrilegious traffickers from His Father's house, proclaiming the impending and certain doom awaiting incorrigible sinners, the workers of iniquity; even antedating by discourse and parable the awful verities of a Judgment-day, and pronouncing everlasting doom on the impenitent and unbelieving; on all traitors to their trust, on all neglectors and squanderers of committed talents; thus repeating, in words not to be misunderstood, the very truth which fell on the ears of Moses in his Rock-cleft, as the sublime voice and vision were dying away—"And that will by no means clear the guilty."* But yet, in combination with this, we are called to contemplate ONE of infinite purity, benignity, tenderness; whose delight was to feed the hungry, to heal the diseased, to help the helpless, to comfort the bereaved; feeling for them; weeping for them:—in His parables, giving a welcome to the Prodigal; in His daily intercourse, never scorning a suppliant's plaint,

* Exod. xxxiv. 7.

or a penitent's tears; listening, even in His expiring agonies, to a cry for mercy from a felon at His side; accepting the widow's mite; making generous allowance for the want of watchfulness at His own greatest crisis-hour on the part of trusted disciples; pardoning, with the tenderest of rebukes, the aggravated sin of a faithless follower; the prayer, trembling on His dying lips, of forgiveness for His murderers.

Reader! take in, at a glance, this wide comprehensive view of the Saviour's life and ministry, and in it you have a picture and impersonation of the character of God. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men."* "From henceforth," says Christ, pointing to Himself, "Ye know the Father, and have seen Him."† "I and My Father are one."‡ Yes, *there* is God! Isaiah's names and titles seem to receive new appropriateness and significance—"the everlasting FATHER,"§ "*Immanuel, God with us.*" || You have obtained, in the person and utterances of that pure, spot-

* Rev. xxi. 3.

† John xiv. 7.

‡ John x. 30.

§ Isa. ix. 6.

|| Matt. i. 23.

less, and beneficent Being, a reply to the words of the Great Prophet—"To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?"* In the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, the Divine Teacher, in His *spoken* words, exhibits before the mental eye of His hearers His Father's hand, in painting the lily, feeding the raven, and watching the sparrow's fall. But it has been well said—"When He would reveal the Father's *heart*, it is not by His words and discourses, but by His deeds and actions." That life of beneficence and goodness sets His own utterance in golden lettering, "GOD SO loved the world!" The very title of "Father," well nigh unknown under a former dispensation—how He dwells upon it!—how He delights to interweave it with parable and miracle, and intercessory prayer, and last agony, and first Resurrection-words! Well He knew the tender associations the name and image would call forth among the millions who pondered the story of His incarnation.

* Isa. xiv. 18.

He would have the sacred earthly relation transfused into the Heavenly. As He puts His people into the clefts of the Rock, and makes all the glory of His goodness to pass by; the proclamation is made, "My Father, and your Father, My God, and your God."* He would have them to know and to feel, even in the house of the earthly tabernacle, that they are pacing a Father's halls;—a dwelling frescoed and decorated with a Father's love!

Although He himself, their Lord and Saviour is no longer visibly present to the eye of sense yet, having been thus embodied once in human form as the reflection of the Father's character, faith can follow the glorious Image within the veil; and with all the memories of that holy life in view from Bethlehem to Olivet, the key-note to the 'divinely taught' prayer can be struck with filial gladness and joy—"Our *Father* which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name!" It has been beautifully said, "In all our endeavours

* John xx. 17.

raise our thoughts to God, the Idea of Jesus comes to our aid like the mystic ladder of the patriarch's dream, and they ascend and descend upon the Son of Man." Yes! thanks to the mystery of His holy incarnation for this full and perfect unfolding of the character of Jehovah. In the Old Testament dispensation, the revelation of God in His Temple evokes from the lips of the worshipper the tremulous exclamation, "Woe is me, for I am undone, . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."* In the New, the experience of the beholder is this—"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."† In the Old Testament dispensation, the first miracle of the Vicegerent of God was turning water into blood. In the New, the first miracle of the Divine Vicegerent, the Image and Representative of the Father, is turning water into wine. In the Old Testament dispensation, in answer to the question, "Who is this King of glory," the reply is

* Isa. vi. 5.

† John i. 14.

heard, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."^{*} In the New Testament dispensation, in answer to the same question "Who is this King of glory?" there comes, in varied language, like an echo from the Rock of Ages, the response—thus embodied in the uninspired utterance of universal Christendom—"Thou art the King of glory, O Christ, Thou art the everlasting Son of *the Father*!"

Believer, exult more and more in this sublime revelation of God. We have already listened in the prologue of John's Gospel, to the Beloved disciple's testimony alike to the Deity and humanity of Messiah—"the Word was God: the Word was made flesh." In the equally sublime prologue to his Epistles, when he speaks of "Him who was from the beginning," and of his own amazing privilege of gazing upon "the manifested Life," he proceeds to deliver a special message confided by this Great Revealer of the Father: "This then is the message which

^{*} Ps. xxiv. 8-10.

we have heard of Him, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”* Strange that this message should be so often misinterpreted, that the beauties of holiness should be disfigured with the presentation of repulsive and distorted views of the character of Deity. The Romanism of the Middle Ages, which, in Church, and Cathedral, and wayside shrine, depicted the Divine Being (either in person or by the ministry of avenging angels), inflicting every device of material torture, seems, as we have already remarked, to be perpetuated in the minds and creed of many Protestants. Who can wonder that under such gloomy systems of misnamed ‘orthodoxy,’ the thought of God is a thought of servile terror, which dogs the footsteps like a hideous spectre, and makes the fondest longing of the aggrieved heart to have Him dethroned from His world.† How different the entire scope of

* 1 John i. 5.

† John Foster, in one of his Essays on this subject, uses the following strong language—“There is a disposition, with not a few, to delight in representing the Deity as a dreadful king of

the Saviour's teaching. His whole object was, "to allure us to God; to win the world to an appreciation of the Father's excellence;"—to unsay and repudiate this inversion of His own word, an inversion which in the case of many might thus be rendered, "God is darkness, and in Him is no light at all." If that Saviour's life was a life of love, full of all that was gentle and tender and good, 'Every feature,' He seems to say to us, 'that is attractive in Me, is to be found in the character of Him whom I represent. I am an Image of the Divine mind, reduced to dimensions capable of human comprehension; to know Me is to know the Father, "from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."*' By all I have done, by word or deed, it is He who is commending His love to you.' What 'a new force and beauty does there not seem to be, in the challenge of the great Apostle,

furies, whose dominion is overshadowed with vengeance, whose music is the cries of victims, and whose glory requires to be illustrated by the ruins of His creation."

* John xiv. 7.

when read in the light of God's paternal character to us and our filial relation to Him—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Rom. viii. 32). 'After giving you,' he seems to say, 'such a pledge of His parental love, can you for a moment suppose that He will exact from you one unnecessary sacrifice, or refuse one really needed boon within the compass of Omnipotence to bestow?' Every dark letter of mourning and lamentation and woe in the roll of Providence, thus becomes radiant with love. In seeing Jesus, you see the Father. In asking Jesus, you ask the Father. The names are interchangeable. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you."* Oh how near does all this bring the great God Almighty! How it represents Him, as regarding with discriminating love each member of His redeemed family; caring for their wants, sympathising with their

* John xvi. 23.

sorrows, bearing with their infirmities; loving them—we had almost said doating on them—a *Father*. How different from the heathen conception of their deities, living in the isolation of a voluptuous calm; far removed from the concerns of earth, devoid of all personal interest in those from whom nevertheless they demanded cruel offerings, and over whom they were often represented as revelling in sanguinary malignity.“ God in Christ,” “God with us”:—“with us,” as truly as Jesus was with the anxious Nicodemus, or with the sisters of Bethany, or the widow at Nain, or the disciples tossed on their midnight sea, or the downcast mourners at Emmaus. “God with us”—brought down from the regions of infinite abstraction—challenging our perfect confidence and trustful love: lifting the veil of the Holy of Holies, not to disclose altars drenched with blood, piled with instruments of torture, and resounding with groans of victims, but “to behold the *beauty* of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple.”

Children of God, and heirs of Glory! go,

breathe your loved and time-worn litany, with the consciousness of a new and glorious meaning and trust,—“ O God, the *Father* of heaven ! have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.” O my gracious Father ! I will measure Thee no longer by any low human standard. Let the kindness and gentleness and benignity of Him who walked this earth as Thine Image, teach me evermore to repose unhesitatingly in the everlasting love of Thine infinite heart. I will cling to this glorious shelter :—in this Rock-cleft “ I will lay me down in peace and sleep ;” for God is *my Father* ; and GOD IS LOVE !

The Immutability of Christ.

- “And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands : they shall perish, but Thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed : but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.”—*Heb.* i. 10-12.
- “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”—*John* xiii. 1.
- “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus.”—*Acts* i. 11.
- “Behold I am alive for evermore.”—*Rev.* i. 18.
- “JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.”—*Heb.* xiii. 8.
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“Build not thy nest on any tree of earth, seeing God hath sold the forest to Death ; but rather soar upwards to the sure and immutable refuge in the Clefts of the Rock.”—*Samuel Rutherford*.

“With what astonishment then, may we behold our dust and ash assumed into the undivided unity of God’s own Person, and admitted dwell here as an inmate under the same roof ! and yet the Bush to remain unconsumed, and to continue fresh and green for evermore.”—*Archbishop Usher*, 1580.

“What a blessing that the Anchor of our love is firmly fixed beneath cross of Christ ; for such a friendship is sure and lasting, not merely fast by the ‘silver cord of life,’ which may be snapped in a moment, embedded in the cleft of the Rock for ever.”—*Hedley Vicar’s Life*.

VII.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND
TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER."—Heb. xiii. 8.

IT is the tritest of sayings that everything here is given to change. If the calm blue sky above us were a mirror, what a scene of vicissitude would it reflect! The outer fabric of the world is a monument of mutability. Its aqueous and igneous rocks—strata piled on strata—are so many chapters written on stone tablets, registering successive revolutions. Hill and Valley contain in many cases the repositories of extinct races and forms, animal and vegetable—a shelved museum of sepulchred generations. Where the hum of cities now ascends, aye, where mountains raise their heads, the murmur of old ocean once was heard. In marine deposits she has left the unmistakeable

trace of her footsteps. While on the other hand forests once grew, and living creatures roared where now we see a waste of waters, and listen only to the boom of the sounding billows.

Passing from the world's material to its historical annals. These are one long record of change. Nation has succeeded nation, dynasty has succeeded dynasty, as wave follows wave. Excavators in the old kingdoms, alike of East and West, have dragged buried capitals from the tomb of ages. The axe and shovel have closed streets grooved with the wheels of riots, and adorned on either side with winged symbols of now vanished power. The owl screeches and the jackal howls amid the tenantless wastes of Babylon. The fisher spreads his net where the green waves lap the Palaces of Tyre. Earth's history and the life of its peoples is a humiliating alternation of rise and fall. There has been a constant weaving and unweaving of the web of nations. The magnificent kingdom of Alexander is no more made, than it is dismembered and partitioned.

The Roman eagle for centuries wings its magnificent flight over a prostrate world; but at last it falls with wings collapsed, and other birds of evil omen from the forests and swamps of northern Europe build their nests in the eaves of the capital. In our own time, who can predict for one brief year what the destinies of contemporary nations may be? what thrones may rock, what sceptres may tremble or fall from the feeble hands that grasp them!

If we turn from nations past and present to the record of individual history, how sadly do we see the same vicissitude written, from the smiles at the birth to the tears at the death. Who that has lived for half the threescore and ten but can bear witness? Who that has measured out the fourscore, but can bear more emphatic testimony still? We go back to revisit the haunts consecrated by the remembrances of youth:—How changed and metamorphosed often are its most treasured memorials! In vain we search for the ancestral trees under whose shadow we sat, or the pendent willows that used

to kiss the passing rivulet. Strange faces appear at the windows; other hands till the soil; other worshippers crowd the pews of the village church, and another voice speaks from its pulpit. The group that was wont to gather under the paternal roof—how the inevitable wave of change has swept over and dispersed it! Many may vividly recall the day—the hour, when that first circle that was wont to gather round the hearth was first broken; that day when you stood by the shore and waved the last farewell to a departing brother, who in sailing to a distant land left the first empty chair behind him. Alas! the first instalment of other inroads, other changes yet to follow. Some can speak of more sacred breaches:—these hearths pillaged of loved tenants called to set sail to further shores. And if not of their own circles, cannot *all* tell, how the friends of their youth, the companions of their boyhood, the associates of their manhood—shipload after shipload have sailed from the shores of time, bound for “the silent land”—that land from whose bourne no voyager, no traveller

returns. Death is ever busy at work reaping the green corn, as well as gathering in the yellow sheaves. Sepulchres seem to lie along our path. Year by year well-known faces are missed, in the exchange, the street, the sanctuary. And even if these friends of bygone times are spared, how changed from what many remember them ! The once buoyant youth now with silvered hair and furrowed brow ; the once athletic frame now stooping with the load of years ; the once clear and vigorous intellect now clouded and impaired ;—memory sharing in the wreck of the crumbling outer tabernacle,—nature lapsing into her second childhood ! Some may have to recount changes sadder and more sorrowful still than bereavement ; breaches in affection ; the fast friend of early life cooled and alienated ; an unmeant word or unmeant deed undoing and obliterating years of intercourse ; the door rudely closed where the heart has lavished its best stores of kindness. What shall we say of human hopes that have been blighted, human joys that have evaporated like a snow-wreath !

golden harvests which the flood has swept away just at the reaping: rock-pillars that have turned out to be sand-pillars; flowers that have drooped, and paled, and died, ere summer began:—what promised to be a brilliant sunset, only a few fitful pulsations of quivering light, and then, a dull watery setting! And not to pursue these reflections, we need go no farther than examine our own individual minds, our tastes, feelings, opinions, course of life, daily associations and occupations. How constantly changing! The man of fifty is no more like the child or youth, than the oak of half a century is like the sapling or acorn from which it sprang. Moulded by ten thousand influences either for good or for evil, through succession of years, we may almost fail to recognise our former selves! Our spiritual history too, how vacillating!—strong one hour, weaklings the next. On our Carmel height to-day; under our Juniper trees to-morrow to-day we fancy ourselves Asahels, swift of foot to-morrow “unstable as water!”

Yes! Human life, outwardly, inwardly, is a 'shifting spectacle;' so says the apostle of it. He compares it to the moving scenes or characters in the old Grecian theatres—"the fashion" (or the *drama*) "of this world, passeth away."* Over the "yesterday" of the past, and the "to-day" of the present, the clouds of heaven are chasing one another. The waves of its seething, restless sea, are tossing and tumbling in fretful disquietude. And whether these changes have been from prosperity to adversity, or adversity to prosperity; converting life, with some, into a golden viaduct, with others, into "a bridge of sighs," they conduct alike to the one final goal. The path of sorrow as well as the path of glory "leads but to the grave."

Oh! amid this heaving ocean of vicissitude;—amid severed friendships and buried loves;—amid these rude heart-shocks of human caprice and surging passion, is there no spot whereon we can plant our foot—no rock-cleft where the wander-

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

ing, tempest-tossed dove can fold its weary
and sink in repose?

This brings us from the *mutable* to consider
the *Immutable*.

The words which head this chapter, proclaim
the unchanging love of Christ:—an Immu-
bility—arising (as has already been fully
considered in previous chapters), out of
Infinite perfection of His own Infinite Be-
ing as “God over all, blessed for ever,” and yet
“Immanuel, God with us.” What He was
the Yesterday of the eternal past when dwelt
in the bosom of the Father, He continued
the time of His incarnation, when still, as God
in very deed He dwelt with men on the earth
and He *shall* continue to be for ever!
We are reminded of some gigantic Alpine peak
unscaled and unscalable by human footsteps
covered summer and winter with virgin snow.
It seems to look down with kingly mien on
angry elements beneath. While these
holding wild riot, it has not a jewel in

icy crown displaced—not a ruffle made in its glistening mantle—not a wrinkle on its everlasting brow. Emblem of the Rock of Ages. Though in His human nature—as the Man of Sorrows—the Surety and Representative of the fallen, furrowed with flood and tempest—“His Visage more marred than any man’s, and His form more than the sons of men,”—in the calm glory of His adorable Godhead He is “without variableness or shadow of turning.” Amid the alterations in earth’s material framework, the convulsions of nations, the fluctuations of human thought and feeling, He remains immutably the same. The march of events works no change in Him: “The Lord sitteth upon (yea above) the waters: yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever!”* Blessed truth! the unchangeableness of Jehovah-Jesus,—“O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the *Rock* of our salvation.”†

* Ps. xxix. 10.

† Ps. xcv. 1.

Specially comforting is it for us to connect the Saviour of the present, with the Saviour lived and loved of old, in the days of His humiliation : to go the round of His deeds of mercy to cull from gospel story all His words of encouragement, His sayings as well as doings, and transfer their perpetual unchanging solace to ourselves. *E.g.*, Did He invite the weary? Did He give the assurance that as the Good Shepherd He came to seek the lost that as the Son of Man He had power on earth to forgive sins?† Did He dry the tears of desolate mourners by proclaiming Himself as the Resurrection and the Life?‡ In sealing up the vision and prophecy, did He give, as His utterance to the Church, the precious invitation “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely?”§ Each of these sayings, and many more, come to us this day with the same reality and freshness as when they first welled forth from these lips of love and tenderness. Other do-

* Matt. xviii. 11. † Matt. ix. 6. ‡ John xi. 25. § Rev. xxi.

rations of earth's wisest and greatest may have lost their power and meaning: these are stereotyped. Other highways may be broken up by the lapse of ages: but this highway of golden words and promises and deeds remains unaltered. Other fitful gleams of light have been cast on the Christian's dungeon-wall for a few moments and then vanished: but these, like Vestal fires, are to burn on for ever. Believer, amid the fitfulness and uncertainty of earth and earthly things, come and enter into this Rock-cleft of a Saviour's unchanging faithfulness. "Trust not in man, nor in the son of man, in whom is no stay."* It may be that some who read these pages may have had, or may be even now having, painful personal proof of that mutability, uncertainty, evanescence and transitoriness, of which we have spoken. You may have felt by experience, how often those joys, which like the bright berries in the summer woods are beautiful to the eye, prove bitter to the taste; how often the

* Ps. cxlvi. 3.

loveliest cloud in the life-sky condenses at last into a shower and then falls; how the loveliest rainbow-hue dissolves; how riches take to themselves wings and flee away; capricious fortune forsaking, often just when the golden dream seems most surely realised! But "HE hath said will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Have you never observed, that while in the course of a long succession of years the scenery on a river's bank may be changed, the river itself remains the same? Formerly it was wont, it may be, to flow through sequestered woods:—its waters, murmuring by forest glades, where the wild deer stole down on the silent eve undisturbed human step. Now hives of industry are lining its course; ponderous wheels are revolving, and the clang of hammers are resounding, where the woodman's axe alone was formerly heard. But the river itself, unchanged and unchangeable, carries its unfailing tributary-torrent to the main. So it is with Him who is as "the River of God." The earthly valley through which the river flows is a scene of change. But onward

it rolls its own glorious volume of everlasting love. "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved!"* "Behold," says the same Immutable One, in another metaphor, "I have graven thee on the palms of Mine hands."† Not on the mountains, colossal as they are, for they shall depart; on no leaf of nature's vast volume, for the last fires shall scorch them; not on blazing sun, for he shall grow dim with age; or on glorious heavens, for they shall be folded together as a scroll. But on the hand which made the worlds, the hand which was transfixed on Calvary, the hand of might and love—I have graven thee there. No corroding power can efface the writing, obliterate the name;—thou art Mine now, and Mine for ever!

Aged Christian, old denizen of the forest,
the frosts of winter silvering your branches,—

* Ps. xlv. 4.

† Is. xlix. 16.

you who feel yourself left alone; too advanced in life to make new friendships, and none, even if you formed them, that could fill the blank of old ones:—blessed, we say for you, with your own years failing, your own strength impaired, your loved ones taken from your side, to lift your tearful eye on the Great Unchanging, and to say, amid these slanting shadows and strip boughs and wintry skies—"But THOU—oh THOU, art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."

Desponding Christian (it may be erring and backsliding one), you who feel clouds and darkness dimming the brightness of former days, cast down because of your coldness and deadness. Past or recent sin may have covered you with shame and sorrow. You may, like the disciples, have slept glorious opportunities away. You may be wondering if Christ can still call on you, as once He did, a pitying eye. Your mournful soliloquy and pensive musing is this:—"Surely my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God!"

comforted. "If *we* believe not, He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself." *You* may have changed towards Him; but *He* is unchanged towards you. The clouds may intervene, but the unchanging Sun shines the same as ever in the firmament. Looking away from your own fluctuating self, you may revert with chastened confidence to the day of your spiritual espousals, when you knew and felt that He loved you; and then take courage in the conviction that that love is unchanged, that it can admit of no diminution nor decay.

Bereaved Christian, you who have been called more specially to experience the sorrows of life, how consolatory to know that there is one prop that cannot give way, one Friend beyond the reach of vicissitude, who is working out your soul's everlasting wellbeing in His own calm world, far above and beyond the heavings and convulsions of ours. One who is the same amid storm and sunshine, births and deaths, marriage peals and funeral knells: of whom you can say, amid the wreck of all human confidences, "The

LORD liveth, and blessed be MY ROCK!" Nay more. When, we ask, is the thought of the immutability of Christ most precious to you? Is it not just when your heart and your flesh are fainting and failing: when lover and friend are put far from you, and your acquaintance into darkness? Like trees which the winds of autumn have stripped of their leaves, you are led, in the very wrestling with these storms, to moor your roots firmer and faster and deeper in the Rock of Ages! You can tell alike as your experience and your confidence—

"Our lives are like the shadows
On sunny hills that lie,
Or flowers which deck the meadows
That blossom but to die :

A sleep, a dream, a story
By strangers quickly told ;
An evanescent glory
Of things that soon grow old.

But Thou—THE ROCK OF AGES
For evermore hast been ;
What time the tempest rages
Our dwelling-place serene."

Yes, sheltered in these clefts, you can feel the

glad assurance, that no desolating wave which has swept away your earthly moorings, can ever separate you from the love of Christ. You can see the rainbow of the covenant resting majestically on the stormy billows, and read on its luminous scroll of ruby and emerald and gold the glorious superscription—"I am the Lord, I change not."

The Sympathy of Christ.

"I know their sorrows."—*Exod.* iii. 7.

"He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted."—*Isa.* lxi. 1.

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping came with her, He groaned in the Spirit, and was troubled, and Where have ye laid him? They say unto Him, Lord, come. Jesus wept."—*John* xi. 33-35.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—*H.*

"FOR WE HAVE NOT AN HIGH PRIEST WHICH CANNOT BE TOUCHED THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES; BUT WAS IN ALL POINTS T LIKE AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN."—*Heb.* iv. 15.

"This happiness does Christ vouchsafe to all His, that as a Saviour once suffered for them, and that as a Friend He always suffers with them."—*Dr South*, 1633.

"O Sirs! there is in Jesus something proportionable to all the wants, necessities, and desires of His poor people."—*Thomas Brookes*

"He is the great sympathetic nerve of the Church, over which oppressions and sufferings of His people distinctly pass. . . . Such this scene of overtoiled labour, and sleepless anxiety, and wasting toils, in which mortals are embroiled, the voice of Jesus—the Friend—the tender Sympathiser with human woe, is heard rising in the kindest compassion."—*Dr Harris*.

VIII.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"FOR WE HAVE NOT AN HIGH PRIEST WHICH CANNOT BE TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES; BUT WAS IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN."—*Heb.* iv. 15.

THE Rock Christ—the Rock of Deity—the Rock high above the lower Valley—mantled in clouds, as if veiled with cherub's wings; inaccessible to human footstep;—its glorious summits the privileged haunt of angels;—that affinity can there be between this Mighty and puny man,—between Omnipotence and weakness—Deity and dust? Affinity, yea more than affinity there is! That Rock, whose top, like the Patriarch's ladder, reaches to heaven, has its base on the earth. Great Redeemer, as we have already seen,

combines the attributes of Godhead with the attributes and characteristics of a true and veritable humanity. To one of the most beautiful features of that humanity—the *divine Sympathy of Jesus*—this new Rock-cleft introduces us.

Among the heart's most sacred and hallowed emotions, none is surely more hallowed than Sympathy. In these dependent natures of our who, in the season of need has not longed for it and when it comes, has not welcomed it like the presence of a ministering angel? Others working with us, feeling for us,—sharing our toil helping us to carry our burdens; entering into our hopes, our joys, our sorrows; to see the responsive tear glistening in the eye;—all this a mighty strengthener and sustainer amid the vicissitudes of chequered life. The lonely fisherman on the stormy sea has his midnight weariness, and it may be of peril, beguiled, as he glances towards the light gleaming in the hut on the shore, and thinks of the wakeful vigils of the loving hearts within. The soldier in his

bivouac under the starry heavens, thousands of miles intervening between him and his native soil, is cheered by the very tread of the sentinel, or the breathing of the slumbering forms around him: or he remembers the far-off home and those whose sympathetic spirits are with him—and the thought is like cold water to a thirsty soul. The martyr at the stake has been often nerved for endurance by the whisper of "Courage, brother!" from the fellow-victim at his side. How the Great Apostle in his Roman dungeon—when he was "such an one as Paul the aged" was cheered by the visits of congenial friends, such as Timothy and Onesiphorus! How touchingly does the illustrious captive invoke God's richest benedictions on the latter and on his household, for "oft refreshing him and not being ashamed of his chain."*

If human sympathy be thus gladdening and grateful, what must be the pure—exalted—sinless—unselfish Sympathy emanating from the

* 2 Tim. i. 16.

heart of the Great Brother-Man? It is of this, we shall now speak; and taking the words which head this chapter to lead our thoughts, let us consider these two points embraced in them—*The sympathy of Jesus, the Great High Priest of His Church*; and the one exceptional characteristic here mentioned, that, "Though in all points tempted as we are"—it was "*Yet without sin.*"

Genuine Sympathy requires that there be an identity, or at all events a similarity of nature, between him who sympathises and the object of sympathy.

The Angel, when he sees the children of fallen humanity in sorrow, may pity; but he cannot sympathise with them. Why? Because he never himself shed a tear; his nature never felt pang of trial, or assault of temptation. We see the worm writhing on the ground—we know it is in agony;—suffering pain. We *pity* it—but we cannot *sympathise* with it. Why? because it is in a different scale of being.

Even in the case of the human family, in their condolence with one another—the finer elements of sympathy are wanting, unless they have passed through the same school of experience. Look at the beggar on the street—the man or woman in ragged tatters, with half-naked children in their arms, singing for a livelihood from door to door. Who, in the majority of instances, are found most ready to respond to the appeal for succour? Observation will prove, that it is not the rich, not even the middle class; most frequently it is the poor themselves. We have often marked such pittance willingly doled out by the artisan, returning from his place of toil at meal-hour, in workman's attire;—one who perchance himself had known the bitter blast of adversity;—what it is to have closed factory doors and silent shuttles, and at whose blackened fires grim penury once sat: his sympathy arises out of *identity of experience* with the sufferers. The bereaved tell the story of their swept and desolated home to a friend:—a friend too, it may be, full to overflowing with

natural feeling. He may listen with heartfelt emotion to all they have to say:—but *he* has never laid a loved one in the grave: trial has never invaded his dwelling: the overwhelming wave of bereavement has never left traces of desolation on his soul. Another comes in. I may not have the same natural strong emotions or sensibilities. But he has consigned treasure after treasure to “the narrow house:” he has himself waded through the deep waters: the woes of others have been traced and chiselled in his own heart of hearts; and consequently the very deeps of his being are stirred. More than one autograph letter has been sent, in recent years, by our beloved Queen, to those high places who have been called to exchange crowns and coronets for weeds of mourning. These, under any circumstances, would have been a grateful and prized expression of royal condolence. But how much more touching and tenderly such utterances came home to those bleeding hearts, when the writing within its deep border, was known to be

blotted with the tears of kindred widowhood !

The same remark may be made with reference to Preaching. How often do we hear trial dwelt upon in our pulpits by the lips of youth :—young (and withal faithful) servants of their heavenly Master, who expatiate on the deathbed, the grave, the broken heart, the wilderness-world, earth “vanity and vexation of spirit.” But yet (say as they will), they have only adopted the phraseology of others : they speak from no experience : they *believe* it all to be true, but they have never *felt* it to be true. Their words therefore come home with little power ; they may even grate upon the ear, as being, in the lips of the declaimers, unnatural and inappropriate. But bring some aged, venerable man,—some old veteran in the school of trial, whose memory and soul are ploughed and furrowed with deep scars ; whose friends in the unseen world number as many as in this : Listen to *him*, as he pours oil and wine into the mourner’s bosom ! How pulse beats responsive to pulse,

and heart to heart. He has been "touched with a fellow-feeling," for he has been in all respects tried even as they. He has been in the furnace himself; the arrow of comfort and sympathy comes feathered from his own bosom and when trial is the theme of his preaching, he speaks feelingly, because he feels deeply.

All this has its loftiest exemplification in the sublime sympathy of the Son of God. He "touched with the feeling of our infirmities: Why? Because "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. His is a deep, yearning, real sympathy arising out of His true and real humanity. His was not an angel-life. He was not, as many falsely picture Him, half Angel, half God: looking down on a fallen world from the far distant heights of His heavenly throne. But He descended, and walked in the midst of it, pitching His tent (as we have seen) among its families: "He took not on Him the nature of Angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham."* The Great

* Heb. ii. 16.

Physician lived in the world's hospital. He did not write out His cures in His remote dwelling in the skies, refusing to come into personal contact with the patients. He walked its every ward. With His own hand He felt the fevered pulses; His own eyes gazed on the sufferer's tears. He stood not by the fiery furnace as a spectator, but there was one in it "like the Son of God."*

To leave us the less doubt as to His capacity for entering into the feelings and sorrows of His people; note His own longing after sympathy. In the Garden of Gethsemane He could not pray the prayer of His agony without it:—"Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."† How cherished to Him was the family home of Bethany, just because He could there pour out the tale of His own sorrows in the ears of congenial human friends. Even at the last scene of all, how sustained He was by human presence! "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother,

* Dan. iii. 25.

† Matt. xxvi. 36.

and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." * Oh blessed thought! He knoweth our frame; for He *had* that frame Himself. "Behold the *Man!*" † Every heart-throb you feel evokes a kindred pulsation in the bosom of the Prince of Sufferers; for "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one (nature)." ‡

But let us advert to one or two special characteristics.

(1.) It is a *present* sympathy. He *is* touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "I *know* their sorrows"—not, 'I *have* known them once, but have now forgotten them in My state of glorification; I *once* bore this frame of yours, but the human nature is merged in the divine.' No. "I AM He that liveth." §

" Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

* John xix. 25. † John xix. 5. ‡ Heb. ii. 11. § Rev. i. 18

“ Our fellow-suff’rer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains ;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies, and cries.”

(2.) Another characteristic is that of *intensity*. Relationship is one of the elements which generates and intensifies sympathy. A man feels for the sufferings of a fellow-man:—but if that sufferer be a relative, connected by ties of blood or affection, how much deeper the emotion.

A stranger standing on the pier, seeing a child or youth struggling in the waves, would feel an uncontrollable impulse to rush to its rescue. If a swimmer, he would plunge into the sea, and cleaving his way through the surge, would make every effort to snatch from a watery grave. But what would be *his* feelings in comparison with those of her, who, from the same point, beheld in that drowning one the child of her bosom? The pity of the former would be lessened itself in comparison with her combined emotions of anguish and tenderness. The father in the wild valley of Dauphiny, who

saw the eagle bearing the infant in its talons to the lofty rock, were moved with horror at the scene, and made several brave efforts to effect a rescue. But it was the mother alone, whose love bore her with fleet foot from crag to crag, till reaching the perilous eyrie, she was in time to clasp the living captive to her bosom, and say,—“This my child was dead and is alive again, it was lost and is found.” Such is the intensity and tenderness of the love and sympathy of Jesus, the “living Kinsman;”—He who is Parent, Friend, Brother, all in one. “Lord, behold he whom *Thou lovest* is sick” *—“Like as a *father* pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him” †—“As one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will I comfort you.” ‡

(3.) The sympathy of Christ is a *comprehensive* sympathy :—embracing not only all His Church, but every individual member of it. It takes in

* John xi. 3.

† Ps. ciii. 13.

‡ Isa. lxvi. 13.

the whole range of human infirmities;—outward troubles, inward perplexities, unspoken griefs with which a stranger dare not intermeddle. No trial, no pang, no tear, escapes His eye. With a microscopic power “He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust,”* as if we stood alone in the world, and individually engrossed all His solitudes. A grain of sand, almost imperceptible, affects the tender organ of sight. This is the Bible emblem of the divine-human sympathy: —“He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.”†

How varied were the methods by which Jesus, when on earth, expressed His sympathetic love and considerate interest! Not to rehearse familiar instances already given, see how, in order to dispel their misgivings, He joins the two disconsolate followers on the way to Emmaus,‡ how He appoints a special meeting to clear up the doubts of Thomas.§ His

* Ps. ciii. 14.

† Luke xxiv. 13-32.

† Zech. ii. 8.

§ John xx. 26-29.

last earthly thought on the cross is providing a home for a mother and a disciple;—"Woman, behold thy Son!—Son, behold thy Mother!"*

(4.) The sympathy of the Divine Redeemer was *active*:—not a mere emotion evaporating in sentimental feeling; the casket without the jewel. There are those who can be touched by reading the pages of a romance, who shed tears over the columns of a newspaper; yet who, though thus able to indulge in fictitious griefs, stretch out no hand of substantial succour to the needy; who, like Priest and Levite in the parable, can see a wounded fellow-being, and leave him half dead.

Not so Christ:—He is the world's good Samaritan, binding up the wounds of aching humanity. He was sent to "heal the broken-hearted;" and nobly did He fulfil His commission: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I GO that I may awake him out of sleep."†

* John xix. 26, 27.

† John xi. 11.

The Divine Consoler never mocked the children of sorrow with a stone when they asked for bread,—saying, in the cold heartlessness of the mere sentimentalist, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled.” He “went about *doing good*.” *

(5.) His was, moreover, an *abiding* sympathy. The world’s sympathy is often short-lived. It cannot penetrate the depths and recesses of the smitten heart. It cannot make allowances for intense grief. It offers its tribute of condolence at the moment ; but if the heart-wounds remain unhealed, it has its own harsh verdict on over-much sorrow. The ripples in the water where some treasured bark has gone down, have closed again ; the world’s vessels cross and recross the spot, but no vestige, no legend of the catastrophe is left on the unstable element. Sorrowful anniversaries come back, but they are all unnoted, save by the bereft one, who has learned

* Acts x. 38.

to lock up these sacred griefs and to weep alone
There is ONE, abiding, unchanging Symp-
thiser :—the Immutable Saviour ! The mo-
may gather over the tombstone, and almost
obliterate the lettering ;—but no corroding har-
of time or of years

“ Can e’er efface us from His heart,
Or make His love decay.”

The sympathy of the dearest earthly friend may
be evanescent ; brother may be estranged from
brother,—sister from sister—friend from friend
But “ there *is* a Friend that sticketh closer than
a brother.” *

We can do little more than notice, in closing
the exceptional clause in the Apostle’s state-
ment, that this Great High Priest, touched with
the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted in all
points even as we are, was “ *yet without sin.*”

Does not this one sentence, however, neutral-
ise, or at least render much inappropriate and
inapplicable, of what we have already said ? I

* Prov. xviii. 24.

perfectly sinless, how could He be tempted? and if not tempted, how could He feel? If perfectly sinless, how could He enter into the most poignant part of our woes, the assaults of corruption, the wiles of the Great Adversary?

We must be careful to guard with jealousy this precious jewel in the Saviour's humanity, His "*impeccability*." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."* He could utter the unanswerable challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"† There was no affinity in His nature with sin or temptation. Apply the lighted torch to the cannon, it will at once give out its voice of thunder because loaded with the explosive element. But, apply the fuse to that same piece of artillery in which the fulminating ingredients are not; it will remain mute and harmless as the rocks and stones around:—and the timid bird can nestle safely in its cavity.

So it was with the sinless nature of Christ.

* Heb. vii. 26.

† John viii. 46.

Temptation, in His case, was the lighted torch applied to the uncharged, unloaded canno Ignition was impossible ; for affinity there was none between the Tempted and the Tempter.

But though incapable of sin, and incapable temptation in the sense of being *overcome* by it. He was *not incapable of suffering* by it. "I SUFFERED, being tempted." * The very holiness of His nature,—the very recoil of His spotless soul from evil,—made the presence of sin, and temptation, the cause of unutterable anguish. And these same refined sensibilities impart to Him now, a livelier and acuter sympathy for those who *are* tempted ; just as the purer the glass, or the brighter the metal, the more visible are they sullied if breathed upon. Though the Prince of this world came and found nothing in Him ;—though no device could drag Him from His steadfastness ;—though the sinless One rolled back wave on wave of temptation, and sent the Adversary discomfited among his legions .

* Heb. ii. 18.

darkness ; did He not feel, with a shrinking and sensitiveness all His own, that Tempter's presence and power ? Hear the testimony and exclamation of His own lips :—" Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour." * When He was standing in meek, silent majesty in Pilate's Judgment-Hall—the Lamb dumb before His shearers—Incarnate Truth in the midst of error, impiety, blasphemy ;—or on the cross, while listening to the cruel taunt and ribald jest of the passers-by, felt He nothing ? Though breathed in silence, *here* is His prophetic experience—" *I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It is melted in the midst of My bowels.*" † Believe it, —it is not a sinful nature, or sinful practice, that makes us feel a deeper sympathy with our fellow-sinners. As it has been well observed, when David was living in flagitious and unre-

* John xii. 27.

† Ps. xxii. 14.

pent of sin,—when his conscience was blunted, and prayer restrained before God ; *then* he had no sympathy,—no mercy for the cruel author of a hypothetical case of violence and wrong. When Nathan told him the story-parable about the ewe-lamb—“ The man that hath done this,” said he, “ shall surely die.” Sin hardens the heart ; blunts the sensibilities. It is the highest and purest specimens of humanity who are the kindest, best, most tender. What, then, must it be with the Great Ideal of all excellence ; the sinless God-man Mediator ?

Yes ! if I wish a true, perfect sympathiser, I look to Him, who, while He had (and has at this moment) a *real* humanity, is, at the same time, “ the *Holy* One of God ; ” — “ tempted,” “ yet without sin ; ” and exult in the Prophet’s words of comfort,—all the more because of His infinite purity—“ A Man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” *

* Isa. xxxii. 2.

Reader, do you know what it is to take refuge in this glorious Rock-cleft, the Sympathy of Jesus? There are crisis-hours in our lives when more especially we need strong support : when, like Jacob at Bethel, we are all alone in a desolate place;—the sun of our earthly happiness set, and our summer friends gone. Or like John, as he wandered in Patmos, the sole survivor of the Apostolic band, old fellow-disciples and companions removed ;—like a tree left solitary in the forest. These are the times when the Saviour delights to come, showing us the ladder which connects the pillow of stones and the weary sleeper with the heights of heaven : or, as in the case of the lonely exile of the *Ægean Sea*, raising us from our prostrate condition, and whispering in our ears His own gentle accents of reassuring peace! It is when the tempest is fiercest, we know the preciousness of such a Refuge:—"When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I!"

The Tenderness of Christ.

"For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant."—*Isa.* liii. 2.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd ; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."—*Isa.* xl. 11.

"And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?"—*Luke* iv. 22.

"Learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart."—*Matt.* xi. 29.

"A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK, AND THE SMOKING FLAX SHALL HE NOT QUENCH."—*Isa.* xlii. 3.

"He never yet put out a dim candle that was lighted at the Sun of Righteousness."—*Charnock*, 1628.

"Upon Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, and was adorned with the acclamations of a King and a God, He wet the Palms with His tears, sweeter than the drops of manna, or the little pearls of heaven that descended upon Mount Hermon ; weeping, in the midst of His triumph, over obstinate, perishing, and malicious Jerusalem."—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1613.

"When our heart does but relent, His melts ; when our eye pities, His bowels yearn. How many forwardnesses of ours does He smother, how many indignities does He pass by ; and how many affronts does He put up with at our hands, because His love is invincible."—*Dr South*, 1633.

"Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee ? They signify the sincerity of His love and pity—the truth and tenderness of His compassion. . . His tears were the natural genuine expressions of undissembled benignity and pity."—*John Howe*, 1630.

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good tidings to the meek. He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted.* “For Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” Oriental kings and potentates of old delighted in ostentation and display. Solomon rode in his cedar chariot, with his body-guard running in glittering attire by his side, their hair covered with dust of gold. But see how prophecy describes this Greater than Solomon, as He goes forth in triumphal state—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”† Tenderness was the sweet fragrance that was to exude from every leaf and blossom of the Stem of Jesse:—“He shall grow up before him as a *tender* plant.”‡ The watchmen in the

* Isa. lxi. 1.

‡ Zech. ix. 9.

† Isa. xxv. 4.

§ Isa. liii. 2.

Canticles, when they met the dejected spouse, wounded her and tore off her veil. When she met her lord, she receives no angry word—no look of upbraiding.* “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth—the poor also, and him that hath no helper.”† “Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace (graciousness, tenderness) is poured into Thy lips.”‡

Passing from prophecy to its fulfilment; the whole ministry of Jesus on earth was the picture of which these are the framework. The opening act of that ministry is the proclamation of His tenderness. The earliest public utterances of a king or statesman are generally taken as indicative of the policy and principles which are to regulate his future career. How beautifully was the initial text He Himself selected in the synagogue at Nazareth, illustrated by a life and example of gentleness and love. Not, like the manifesto of many public men, belied through

* Sol. Song, v. 7, iii. 4. † Ps. lxxii. 12. ‡ Ps. xlv. 2.

fickleness and caprice, or the delirium of success;—their promised acts and deeds of generosity and benignity lapsing into coldness and selfishness, and austerity. As we watched the crowds of helpless and diseased, sick and fevered, orphaned, friendless, and dying, who thronged the way wherever He went, we saw how the tenderness of His words was endorsed and countersigned by His equally tender deeds.

Let us go and stand by that porch of mercy and witness the throng, as they severally approach with their tale of anxiety and perplexity—sorrow and sin.

Here is one! He comes by night. When the evening shadows have closed around Jerusalem and no unkindly human eye is able to track his footsteps, he hies him to those gates of compassion. His soul is fevered and restless. He is sick at heart with the worn-out conventional forms of Judaism, and longing to hear of the principles of the new Kingdom. How tender does the Great Teacher listen to the questions

this anxious inquirer, in the anguish of his first convictions, and unfold to him the wondrous story of God's everlasting love !

Here is another !—an avaricious tax-gatherer ; one who, in all probability, in common with the class to which he belonged, had preyed upon widows and orphans in exacting his unscrupulous gains ; one, moreover, who, on account of his extortionate calling, we may well believe had seldom or ever listened to a kind or generous word from his brother townsmen of Jericho ; rather, who had been subjected on all sides, and not undeservedly, to suspicion and distrust. Strange and novel must have been the gleam of tenderness in that eye which scanned him among the thick branches of the sycamore ; unwonted the kindness conveyed in the intimation which fell on his ears, “Zaccheus, to-day I will abide at thy house.”* The word of the infinitely pure One, awoke sensibilities that were dormant, or rather, which had been crushed and

* Luke xix. 5.

stified by an un-sympathising world, and "received Him joyfully."

Here is another ! He is the most bruised and broken of all :—one who had imagined himself strong in faith, giving glory to God ; but who had ignominiously bent before the blast of temptation and had denied his divine Master with oaths and curses. Can there be aught of tenderness manifested towards the renegade Apostle ? Surely he has placed himself, by his heinous guilt and craven cowardice, beyond the pale of forgiveness. No ; when we might have thought the heart he had ungenerously wounded was alienated from him for ever, there was first a "look" of infinite love—a melting glance, which sent him forth to weep bitter tears over foul ingratitude and subsequently a message, entrusted to the Angel-guardian of the sepulchre and conveyed by him to the three women, "Go your way and tell His disciples *and Peter*."* 'Go, tell the most faithless of My followers, that even for his

* Mark xvi. 7.

there is still a place in My tender regard. Go, tell this wandering bird with drooping wing and soiled plumage, that even for him there is a place of shelter still open in the clefts of the Rock.' Nay more, when Jesus met him subsequently on the shores of Gennesaret, instead of dragging afresh to light painful memories of abused kindness and broken vows, all now too deeply felt to need being recalled; no severer utterance for unworthy apostasy was pronounced, than the gentle rebuke conveyed in the thrice-repeated challenge, "Lovest thou me?"

Or, if we may revert to a yet earlier scene in His ministry, it is the occasion on which degraded guilt was brought face to face with perfect Purity and Innocence. He does not palliate the enormity of transgression. By no means! But He who read the heart, makes it an opportunity of proclaiming what His mission is, as a mission of forgiveness. He utters, in the case of the sinner who then confronted Him (as in that of the other weeping Magdalene who bedewed His feet with her tears), the gracious absolution, "Neither do

I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."* I again refuses to break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax; to send a wreck misery out, unsuccoured, amid the black night and the howling pitiless winds. "Go and learn. He seems to say, "what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." "I came not call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Indeed, when pronouncing some of His most impressive woes and threatenings, He appears, times, as if He dreaded lest any broken-hearted one might misinterpret His sayings, and construe His wrath against sin and hypocrisy indicating a want of consideration to the penitent. Take as an example the occasion when He had been proclaiming stern words regarding the contemporary "sinful generation;" more especially rebuking them for their blind unbelief in the midst of light and privilege; declaring that those cities which had scorned His message (Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum), it would

* John viii. 11.

† Matt. ix. 13.

be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them. He seems suddenly to pause. The storm has exhausted itself. Possibly amid the crowd who had just listened to these vocables of wrath, His Omniscient eye discerned some trembling outcast—some brittle reed or sapling bending beneath the hurricane. He will not suffer it to be broken. He will not permit the wind and earthquake and fire to pass, without being followed by a ‘still small voice ;’—and then it is, that the words (unparalleled in their tenderness and beauty among all He ever spake) come like a gleam after the tempest, or like a rainbow encircling with its lovely hues the angry spray :—“ Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” *

In His last prayer preceding the Passion, how touching are His pleadings in behalf alike of His disciples and His Church ! More like a mother’s tenderness over her defenceless children, when,

* Matt. xi. 28.

leaving the parental care, they are sent forth lonely and unbefriended to face and fight the battles of life in an ungenial world. In the climax of His own humiliation, when nailed to the cross of Calvary, how tenderly does He commit His dearest earthly relative to the keeping of His dearest human friend ! How tenderly in the extremity of anguish and soul-desertion, does He speak words of heart-cheer to the dying thief at His side ! How tenderly does He plead for those who had wound the twisted thorn around His bleeding brows, and driven the rough iron into those hands which had never been employed save to cure—never uplifted save to bless !

On the Mount of Ascension, when the gates of heaven were ajar, and its distant halleluiahs of welcome to “the King of glory” were already wafted to His ear—how tenderly He breathes a farewell on the orphaned band ; as if all His thoughts and all His love were still centred on those He was about to leave behind Him ;—the last vision imprinted on their memories being

that of His arms uplifted in benediction! When He meets the beloved disciple in Patmos, and the awestruck beholder, dazzled with the lustre of His glorified humanity, falls at His feet as one dead—how tenderly is he reminded that he is in the presence of the same unchanged and unchanging ONE, on whose bosom of love he had often pillowed his head on earth. At midnight, years before, on the dark, stormy surface of Gennesaret, the Spirit-form he and his fellow-disciples so much dreaded, spake the reassuring word, “Fear not; it is I; be not afraid!” ‘That same Jesus’ comes down now from the still waters of the river of life—the nightless city of the crystal sea, with the same well-remembered soothing lullaby:—“He laid His right hand upon me, saying, ‘*Fear not.*’”* It was, yet again, “as one whom his mother comforteth.” Oh, when the aged Evangelist and honoured Seer retired to Ephesus, in the evening of his life, to put in writing personal experience of the Divine dealings, well might he say (regard-

* Rev. i. 17.

ing these and other remembrances, indelibly impressed on him, of his living, loving Lord. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth!*"

Let it, however, be very carefully noted, that there was nothing indiscriminate in the tenderness of Christ. It was tenderness towards the weak, the poor, the helpless, the penitent, the erring. There was, as we have already had occasion to remark, no tenderness towards sinners. On the contrary, there was uncompromising severity towards all wrong-doing and hypocrisy, oppression and untruthfulness. How unsparingly He lashed the vices of the age! With what withering words He confronted and combated Pharisee and Sadducee! When the tears were scarce dry which He wept over Jerusalem, the scourge was in His hand driving the sacrilegious traffickers from the Temple courts, who had converted the most sacred ground on earth, into place and opportunity for ministering to their own avarice! "Get thee

* John i. 14.

hence," was His voice of stern rebuke, as the guilty crowd fled affrighted from His presence.

Side by side with the Parable of the Vineyard labourers, wherein, even at the eleventh hour, a welcome was offered and wages given to every unhired idler in the market-place—we have the Parable of the Blighted Fig-tree on the heights of Olivet (with its pretentious foliage—"nothing but leaves")—stretching out its skeleton arms to heaven, a monument of vengeance:—this the malediction uttered against it by these same lips of compassion—"Henceforth let no fruit grow upon thee for ever."*

Reader, do you know the preciousness of the Rock-cleft on which we have been dwelling? amid the rough blasts of life, to take shelter in the Tenderness of Him whose love is better, truer, more enduring, than that of the kindest and most loving of earthly friends? Have you learnt to sing amid the moanings of the storm—

"Jesus, Refuge of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly ;

* Matt. xxi. 19.

When the waters o'er me roll,
While the tempest still is high?"

Do you know what it is, as one of the sheep
His pasture, when weary and footsore, pale
and burdened,—to repair to this Infinitely
cious Shepherd, who, in the beautiful meta-
phor of Isaiah already quoted, delights to carry
Lambs in His arms and *gently* to lead His
burdened ones?

What are these burdens? They are many
and diversified.

With one, it may be that of *conviction*.
He may have reached the momentous time in
his spiritual history, when conscience has awoken
him from the low dream of earth with quickened
sensibility: when forgotten sins are brought
before you in vivid memorial; the arrears of
misspent life flashing upon you the reality of
hopeless bankruptcy; and you feel how utterly
vain is the plea with which you have long sought
to delude yourself—"Have patience with me,
and I will pay Thee all." You may feel, you
change the figure, that in yourself you are
the most worthless and abandoned of prodigals.

that you have righteously forfeited a place within the paternal halls ! But, He is waiting your return. He sees you, haggard, hunger-stricken—sick at heart. He watches the first indications of penitential sorrow. While yet “a great way off,” He is ready with the fond embrace and the kindly welcome. Wondrous tenderness, surely, do these His own words describe, in that surpassingly touching parable—“His Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.”* What ! the riotous living—the spendthrift life—the debasing companionship, all forgotten ? Yes, by that one kiss of forgiveness, all is buried in everlasting oblivion !

With another—it may be the burden of *desecration* and *backsliding* :—the guilt of apostasy in a first love—the decay of the inner life. Unforgotten sin and permitted worldliness have induced languor and lethargy. You are not what once you were ;—you have lost tenderness of conviction ;—you have blunted the fine

* Luke xv. 20.

edge of conscience ;—the old ardour in the divine race is gone ;—you have allowed the tooth of earthly cares to corrode—petty vexations and annoyances to eat out the kernel of religion : “ the little foxes ” have entered unchallenged the soul’s vineyard and spoiled the grapes. None more bruised and broken than you. The flax, once burning clear, gives forth now nothing but noxious smoke—polluting and poisoning the atmosphere of your spiritual being ! Despond not. The forgiving love and tenderness of Christ can meet your case. Burdened one, He thy Shepherd is willing gently to lead thee also. He will rekindle these smouldering ashes of a dying love—He will “ strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die.”* What says He, by the lips of the Prophet, to His backsliding people ? (and He says the same to you) —“ Behold thou hast spoken, and done evil things as thou couldst ” (as much as to say—‘ You could not have done worse ’). “ Yet,” He adds, “ Go and proclaim these words toward

* Rev. iii. 2.

the north, and say—Return, thou Backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.” *

With another, the burden may be of a different kind. It may be the burden of *sorrow and trial*. He may have touched you to the quick. It may be the woundings of friends—hardships in leading a religious life—the jeers and mockings of impious companions, or those of your own household. It may be the loss of worldly substance, or the blighting of fond affection, or the yawning chasm made by death and bereavement ;—these and similar causes may have made you weary and heavy-laden—or left you a broken bruised reed on the world’s highway. You may be unable to trace the mystery of the Divine dealings—you may be even tempted to indulge in unworthy surmises regarding the Divine faithfulness ! What a blessed Rock-cleft for you also, in the tenderness of Him, who, being a disciple Himself in this school of affliction, is able to

* Jer. iii. 12

enter with exquisite sensitiveness into all your sorrows: That apparently rough voice of the true Joseph to His brethren, is tenderness in disguise. He will not speak *too* roughly. He knows what you can bear. He will temper the wind to the shorn lamb;—He will make this sorrow, whatever it be, fruitful in blessing—"For thus saith the Lord—as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it—so will I do for My servant's sake." * So tender is He, that He feels what is done to His people as if it were done to Himself—"Saul Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*?" † The faintest sound of woe still, as of old, arrests His ear. As in nature, He alike guides the planets in their orbits, and watches the fall of the sparrow; as He alike tends the kingly sun and the lowly dewdrop: so in the moral and spiritual world. While He receives the archangel's homage, He listens to the cry of the infant on its knees—or notes the tear and the wail of the widow in her agony. Like His own shepherd in the parable,

* Isa. lxxv. 8.

† Acts ix. 4.

He rejoices to go after the lost one—the veriest truant of the fold—“until He find it.”

O Thou, into whose lips grace is poured!—Thou Mighty One!—Yet infinitely tender!—ride forth in Thy glory and in Thy Majesty, “because of truth and meekness and righteousness!” Forbid that it should be, in the case of any perusing these pages, as with Jerusalem of old—that tears of compassion should be accompanied and followed by words of reproach and doom. “How often would I have gathered you!” How often would I have rescued the broken reed, and fanned the smoking flax,—carried the feeble lamb, led the burdened, and given rest to the weary,—“but ye would not: therefore now is your house left unto you desolate!”

Blessed be God, that voice of kindness still sounds in our ears:—that waiting Saviour—though His “head be wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night”—still stands knocking, with tones of tenderness on His lips, and the hoarded love of Eternity in

His heart! The Great Apostle had many incentives to use, many golden chains where with to moor the tempest-tossed to the Rock of Ages. Among these is the very theme of our present chapter—"Now I Paul beseech you by the *meekness and gentleness of Christ*."* It was indeed no new or original argument. It was that taught and enforced by his great Lord Himself—when He said, in the memorable word already quoted, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: *for* I am meek and lowly."† The traveller who refused to part with his cloak at the bidding of the furious wind, surrendered it to the warming influence of the sun. What the tempest of the law—"the terrors of the Lord"—fail to effect,—may be accomplished, and often is accomplished, by the genial beams radiating from the true Sun of Righteousness. Let us own their potency. Let us fall down, vanquished by His gentleness. Blessed Saviour, let the

* 2 Cor. x. 1.

† Matt. xi. 28, 29.

tenderness of Thy deeds on earth—the tenderness of Thine invitations to the weary and the burdened—the tenderness of Thy tears wept over Jerusalem—the tenderness of Thy words spoken in Thy death-agony, salvation to the felon and forgiveness to the murderer,—let these and other memories of gospel story—like a peal of heavenly bells, summon me to enter the opened gates of mercy. Let me listen to them, as the many-toned voices of the Beloved inviting to flee to the ‘Clefts of the Rock.’ There, safe,—secure,—at rest for ever, and with the blessed consciousness of all the elevating, ennobling privileges to which Thy bleeding love has exalted me—may it be mine to say in the triumphant words of the Psalmist, “Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation ; and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and THY GENTLENESS HATH MADE ME GREAT.”*

* Ps xviii.

Christ the Peace Giver.

- "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace."
John xvi. 33.
- "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace unto you."
Luke xxiv. 36.
- "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Lord Jesus Christ."
Rom. v. 1.
- "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down middle wall of partition between us."
Eph. ii. 14.
- "Having made peace through the blood of His cross."
Col. i. 20.
- "PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT A WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU."
John xiv. 27.
-

"The heart never resteth till it findeth rest in Thee."
Augustine,

"Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night walking upon the water. He stilled the tempest in my soul: and lo! there was a sweet calm."
Thomas Halyburton, 1670.

"Oh that I might effectually recommend to you the full possession of this precious legacy of our blessed Saviour, *Peace*."
Bishop Hall, 1574.

X.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE
UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH,
GIVE I UNTO YOU."—*John* xiv. 27.

NO shadow of the "Great Rock in the weary land," is more grateful to the children of humanity than this. The circumstances in which the Saviour uttered these words were interesting and peculiar, and give a deep pathos to His declaration. It was at a time, one would have thought, of the deepest dispeace and disquietude to His own soul; a time when the saying, "My peace I give unto you," would have seemed a strange and equivocal boon: for the shadows of the cross were gathering around Him; the Prince of darkness was prowling on His path; and the

awful scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary were close at hand. And yet it was *then* (yes, at the very moment when the Rock of Ages was wrapped in portentous gloom), that Jesus speaks of the calm and the rest awaiting those who find shelter in its clefts. He was delivering His final charge to His disciples; imparting to them directions, comforts, and promises—His farewell benediction. Some consolation, higher than earth could afford, was needed, when the Shepherd was about to be smitten and the sheep to be scattered. In the clouds of that dark, troubled horizon He sets the bow of covenant *Peace*. His utterance was more than a promise:—it is couched in the formula of a last Will—a Testamentary deed. It is the dying legacy which the Prince of Peace bequeaths to His Church and people in every age.

Taking these words of Jesus more specially to guide our thoughts, let us advert to *three*, out of many characteristics of this priceless bequest.

I. It is a *well-founded peace*: and in this respect it is "not as the world giveth." By reason of the great original apostasy, the soul of man has lost its peace; and fallen nature, not ignorant of the loss, yet all unconscious where the forfeited boon is to be recovered, is engaged in a perpetual effort to effect the restoration. In ten thousand ways does the world "minister to a mind diseased," singing its siren lullaby—"Peace, Peace;" while, from the unsatisfied aching voids of the heart, the echo is returned, "No peace." The object desired being too often sought either at forbidden or at polluted fountains, multitudes fail to secure the coveted prize. The Peace enjoyed by the believer in Jesus, is full, complete, satisfying. It rests on the broad foundation of His atoning work and sacrifice, ratified by the Father and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. It is the *death* of the Divine Testator which enables us, by law, to enter on this bequeathed heritage—"Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the Testator. For a testament is of force after

men are dead—otherwise it is of no strength all while the Testator liveth.”* Never was a will so “proved,” “attested,” as this. The adorable Redeemer surrendered His precious life, in order that (in the words just quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews) it might be rendered “of force forever.” Moreover, unlike all mere human and earthly Testators, He rose from the grave and ascended to His Father’s right hand, to see its provisions and bequests implemented. He who executes this testamentary disposition is still our Advocate in the Court of Heaven : and, as such, will take care that all His heirs are infested in purchased blessings. It is a peace founded on the principles of everlasting truth and everlasting righteousness. As its primary condition it secures alike the vindication of the divine law and the manifestation of the divine glory; the Angels who came to announce the restoration of the lost heritage, sang—“Glory to God in the highest,” before they proclaimed “Peace

* Heb, ix. 16.

earth."* Let us think of it, then, as a peace purchased by Jesus—"Peace through the blood of His cross." In no other way could it have been procured. By no other could it be bestowed. No voice, but the voice which exclaimed in dying accents, "It is finished," can say to the troubled tempest-tost soul—"Peace, be still." In the familiar Bible narrative, we see the heathen sailors rowing hard to bring the vessel to land, in whose hold was the fugitive Prophet. It was in vain. "The sea wrought, and was tempestuous"† :—wave after wave baffled strength of oar and muscle. What then was their expedient? The sacrifice of the one life was demanded and surrendered for the sake of the others. So it was with the true Jonah. When He was taken and cast into the deep—that deep was hushed into a calm—its fury stilled—every tumultuous billow rocked to rest :—"The sea ceased from her raging." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our

Luke ii. 14.

† Jon. i. 11.

Lord Jesus Christ." * As it was sin that was the cause of dispeace, so the Redeemer, by His propitiatory, meritorious sacrifice, has put that cause away. He has effected the atonement ("at-one-ment.") "He is our peace, who has made *both one*." We are "made nigh to God by the blood of Christ." In a striking passage in Isaiah, God and man, by a bold figure of speech, are represented as at war with one another—"going through the wicked" as "briers and thorns" and "burning them up together." A gracious alternative is also provided and offered—"OR, let him take hold of My *strength* that he may make peace with Me, and he *shall* make peace with Me."† "He SHALL." Peace is not certain and precarious in other things. It is often a hollow truce, which hushes for a time the clang of arms, only to have the strife resume. But it is certain here : for the "one offering" is the Great Pacificator, who is God's "Strong Arm"—"the Arm of the Lord"—"the Man of

* Rom. v. 1.

† Isa. xxvii. 5.

right hand"—has given Him the prerogative to utter the words, "Ye *shall* find rest unto your souls."

Let all those who are going about seeking peace and finding none, shelter themselves under the eagle-wings of this glorious truth. That peace is no simulation—no counterfeit. There is no flaw in these title-deeds. It is a perfect peace—peace with God above, and peace with conscience within :—peace secured by the Sufferer on the Cross, and ratified by the Kingly Intercessor on the Throne. Like the weary bird, after tracking its way across long leagues of waste ocean, the believer can sink into the crevice of the Great Rock, and sing the song of an older heir of covenant blessings, "Return unto thy Rest (thy Peace), O my soul."*

II. Another characteristic of the peace of Christ is, that it is a *present* peace; and as such,

* Ps. cxvi. 7.

“not as the world giveth.” The world’s visions of peace are most generally prospective; the world’s notes are promissory. Many of its best blessings are reversionary. Its hope ‘deferred’ too often maketh the heart sick. Its future is full of air-castles in due time to be reared; but when the longed-for season of realisation comes, they often they turn out to be airy nothings, “baseless fabrics of a vision.” Many a man has a lifetime to wait, before the hopes of youth are fulfilled, and when the wealth or the leisure he has aspired after, or the broad acres he has hoped to inherit come to him, frequently he cannot enjoy them. The zest of life is over; the tinted soap-bubble he has for long years been inflating collapses, and new disquietudes and troubles take the place of the old ones! Not so the peace of Jesus. It is a peace, indeed, largely in reversion, in a better world; but it is a peace, if not in degree, at least in kind, possessed in the present also. The moment the offers of grace are closed with and accepted, the charter of peace is put into the believer’s hands. He receives the first in

stalment of the gracious benefaction, "We which have *believed* DO enter into *rest*." * "All that believe *are* justified." † "Being justified by faith, *we have* peace with God." ‡ "I AM pacified," says God, "towards you." § "Beloved NOW are we the sons of God." || The Prodigal, in returning to his Father's house, had not first to undergo years of probation before he received the kiss of peace and reconciliation and love; he had not to wait till the flush of health had filled his sunken cheeks, or until clad in seemly attire he could venture into his Father's presence. No;—just as he was—in all the rags of the 'far country'—with haggard face, and trembling limb, and sunken eye—he receives the paternal welcome, and gets ring, and robe, and shoes, put upon him.

Reader, think of this! If you have been brought, self-renouncing and sin-renouncing, to the foot of the cross, the peace of God and of His Christ is already yours. If that peace had

* Heb. iv. 3.

† Acts xiii. 39.

‡ Rom. v. 1.

§ Ezek. xvi. 63.

|| I John iii. 2.

been in any way your own procuring, then might its attainment be effected only after years of laborious effort. But being purchased, you have only to come and accept it as a free gift, a blessed gratuity; being bequeathed to you, you have only to claim joyfully the legacy, and enter on its possession:—"giving thanks unto the Father, which HATH made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."* It was a common salutation among the Jews in entering a dwelling of old, "Peace be upon this house." So Jesus, standing by the threshold of every believing penitent soul, says, as He said to His gathered disciples on the evening of His resurrection day, "Peace be unto you." "My peace I GIVE unto you" (not "I *shall* give"). "O, my dove, who *art* in the clefts of the Rock."†

III. A third characteristic of the peace of Jesus is, that it is a *permanent* peace:—and as such, it is "not as the world giveth." Many of the world's

* Col. i. 12.

† Song of Sol. ii. 14

best blessings, those which are considered to minister most effectually to outward happiness and inward tranquillity, ours to-day may be gone to-morrow—we have no pledge or guarantee for their continuance. They are fed from the low marshy grounds of earth, dependent on fitful seasons and capricious showers. But the peace of Christ being from Heaven, is a perennial stream; it is fed from surer supply than glacier Alps, and it rolls on in undiminished fulness and volume, in summer's drought and in winter's cold. It is the greatest of mistakes to suppose that mere outward things, title, wealth, property, honours, give peace. It is often the reverse. They give care and anxiety. They give birth to envyings and jealousies, to discontent and ingratitude. They are as often a man's curse as a blessing. But the peace of Jesus is irrespective and independent of all outward accidents. It bears up and sustains amid the harassments of business, the crushings of poverty, the weariness of sickness, the pangs of bereavement, the shadows of death. Yes! if you would wish

to understand the true meaning of that phrase, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," go to the believer's dying couch; see (what may be witnessed again and again) when earth is dimming from the view;—when the footsteps are standing on the threshold of the mysterious spirit-world, and all that is held dear is to be parted from for ever. Listen to the words so oft whispered, "All is peace—perfect peace." And as the colour fades from the cheek, and the smile of heaven suffuses the now hushed and silent lips, oh, how is the promise—(realised indeed, all through life—but never more so than in life's closing hour)—how is that promise then fulfilled—"Thou wilt KEEP him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."* Among the glorious army of martyrs, who have then witnessed and exemplified the sustaining peace of God, those at all events familiar with Scottish annals, may recall one whose calm heroism is made more

memorable in a familiar picture. There God's noble-minded servant is represented reclining on a rude couch. He has the horrors of execution before him on the morrow; yet he lies in tranquil slumber, like a babe on its mother's breast. When the waves of death are dashing at his feet, he calmly reposes in this Rock-cleft of *peace*! Well may the gifted author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" give the name of "PEACE" to the chamber "in which Christian lay," and whose "window opened towards the sunrising."

We may conclude with a word of *explanation*, and a word of *exhortation*.

It must not be imagined, from what has been said, that the believer's history is one of unclouded calm—a sky in which there brood no storms—a path in which there lurk no briars. That strange paradox of the apostle will be true to the last in the Christian's experience, "*sorrowful yet always rejoicing*." Paul, even when he speaks of peace, exhorts to have "the feet SHOD;" for, notwithstanding its possession, the road is

often a rough and a thorny one. The same voice which proclaims, "My peace I give unto you," adds, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The way to peace is often through the channel of unrest and trial; just as the water that sleeps quietly in the pool has found its way thither over jagged rock and foaming cataract. The disciples' way to land, and that too at their Master's bidding, was through a stormy sea, "toiling in rowing." The Israelites' road to the rest of Canaan was through the sterile wilderness. Jacob's way to spiritual victory, and a peace to which he was a stranger before, was through a night of wrestling and soul-struggle. The afflictions of life,—temptation without and corruption within,—are ever and anon ruffling the calm repose of the soul, and reminding that true peace and abiding rest are above. "Beloved," says St Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."* This is the

* 1 Pet. iv. 12.

history of every harper on the glassy sea, "These are they who came out of great tribulation." * Amid all trials, however, it is the believer's consolation, that, despite of outer disquietudes, the true peace of Christ itself cannot be disturbed. The former are only like the surface-heavings of the ocean. That surface alone is fretted and ruffled. Go down into its unexplored depths, among its luscious wildernesses of submarine seaweed—its coral rocks and wondrous mosaic of pebble and sand, and all is peaceful and still. No rolling billow is heard there—no roaring breaker—no scream of stormy petrel. So with the soul! In its lowest, truest depths, all is peace. The ship may be tossed, but its moorings are secure. In the same sentence in which the pressure of present corruption impels St Paul to cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" he adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." † He bemoans the tossings of the frail bark in one breath—he remembers the strength

* Rev. vii. 14.

† Rom. vii. 24, 25.

and security of the anchor in the next. The believer's *subjective peace*, the calm assurance or consciousness of his interest in Christ, may be often assailed. But the peace itself cannot be. The clouds, engendered by sin and weakness and unbelief, may at times obscure from his vision the disc of the Sun. But the Sun, notwithstanding, shines brightly as ever. Once that peace is his, he knows it never can be finally forfeited. The flowing of the spiritual river may be impeded;—there may be opposing rocks which here and there fret the even course of its current;—but it will surmount them all, and mingle its waters at last in the ocean of eternal peace and love in heaven. Meanwhile, beware of creating such obstructions as will tend to mar your peace:—indulged sin, or neglected duty. You may be personally responsible for diverting the river from its channel, and leaving your soul “a dry and thirsty land where no water is.” “Great peace,” says the Psalmist, “have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (or rather, “they shall have no stumbling-block, or impediment”).

Keep out of the way of temptation ; avoid the brink of the precipice if you would avert a fall. Keep beyond reach of the fire lest you be burnt. "Oh," exclaims the great Giver of peace, speaking to His backsliding Israel, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, *then* had thy peace been as a river." * What is the apostle's recipe for the preservation of peace ? "Be careful for nothing," says he, "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving : . . . And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep your hearts." † "Walk," he again enjoins, "in the Spirit ;" and what is the result ? "The fruit," he adds, "of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE." ‡

Let us add yet a word of *exhortation*. Some may fancy themselves in the happy position of not requiring this gospel boon of which we have been speaking. They are undisturbed by any fears of guilt. They know no accusations of con-

* Isa. xlviii. 18.

† Phil. iv. 6, 7.

‡ Gal. v. 22.

science. They contrive to banish the of death and what is after death. And when they come to that solemn crisis the Psalmist's description may be true of them: they have "no bands in their death; their strength is firm." *

Is this, however, peace? Yes. But peace of the churchyard. The dead "hear nothing." No voice reaches the ears in the land. The voice of affection, the sobs of condolence, may break over the grassy turf, but they hear them not. The "loud stunning of human care" may go surging past the graves;—the dumb tenants listen to the steps; the clang of battle may be heard close by, profaning the sanctity of 'God's acre'—the sound of no trumpet or clarion, the roll of arms nor roll of drum, wakes one in that empire of oblivion; silence sways the unchallenged sceptre. It is the dreariness and peace of *death*! Beware of

* Ps. vii. 3, 4.

peace of the soul as this. It is possible to continue, even to the last, self-deluded and self-deceived, and to die with a lie in your right hand. But be assured, from such a peace there will be a terrible awaking. It is only the portentous silence which, in the outer world, holds nature mute before the bursting of the thunderstorm. "There *is* no peace"—there *can* be no peace, "saith God, to the wicked." Be it yours to ascertain, ere it be too late, on what foundation your peace rests. Give up the vain dream of procuring peace in anything short of HIM. No wealth can give it ; no wealth of money, no wealth of intellect, no wealth of affection. Live near the cross, and peace is yours. "How beautiful upon the mountains" are the feet of the divine messenger who "*publisheth peace!*"* You may now be racked with care, fevered with disappointment, and, worse than all, bound and fettered with sin. Like the maniac of old dwelling among the tombs, you may be roaming the moral

* Isa. lii. 7.

wastes, crying and cutting yourself with
One voice alone can tame you, and chan-
storm of the soul into a calm ;—*that*
JESUS. There (at His cross and His feet)
will have possession of peace ;—peace from
condemning sentence of the law—peace from
accusations of a guilty conscience—peace from
the trials of life—peace in the prospect of
proaching dissolution. You will have peace
the gladdening, sustaining conviction that
events are under your Redeemer's control.
He orders all that concerns your temporal
eternal wellbeing. You can sleep securely
tempest, for the helm is in the hands of
whom these winds and waves obey. "Thou
of righteousness shall be peace ; and the fruit
of righteousness quietness and assurance
ever." *

Speed, then, your flight, O weary wanderer,
to the true Ark. The true Noah, the "Savior of
the Peace-giver, invites you within. See

* Isa. xxxii. 17.

olive-branch, and wing your way across the stormy waters. The bough on which your earthly nest was built, may have been felled by the axe or broken by the storm ; but “ He is our peace.” And as driven by the windy tempest your cry is, “ O Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, grant me Thy peace !”—O Rock of Ages, cleft and smitten for me, grant me Thy shelter !—May it be yours to listen to the glad response, “ My peace I give unto you ;”—“ Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

Christ a Saviour to the uttermost.

- "I now shak call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from ~~the~~ sins."—*Matt. i. 21.*
- "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—*Luke xiii. 30.*
- "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—*1 Tim. i. 15.*
- "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."—*1 John i. 7.*
- "HE IS ABLE ALSO TO SAVE THEM UNTO THE UTTERMOST THAT COME UNTO GOD BY HIM."—*Heb. vii. 25.*

"Thou great—thou Jerusalem sinner: be of good cheer, He calleth thee He who has the biggest burden is he who is first invited. Christ pointeth over the heads of thousands, as He sits on the Throne of Grace, directly to such a man, and says, Bring in hither the maimed, the halt, and the blind; let the Jerusalem sinner that stands there behind come to ~~me~~. Wherefore since Christ says, 'Come' to thee;—let the angels make a lane, and let all men give place, that the Jerusalem sinner may come to Jesus Christ for mercy."—*Bunyan, 1668.*

"Who is a God like unto Thee? None can pardon as Thou dost. None can pardon so freely—none so fully—none so continually—none so eternally—none so indifferently, whether in respect of sinners or sin as Thou dost. It is all one to Thee what the sins are, and all one to Thee whose the sins are, so they come to ask Thy pardon."—*Joseph Caryl, 1670.*

XI.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

HE IS ABLE ALSO TO SAVE THEM UNTO THE
UTTERMOST THAT COME UNTO GOD BY
HIM."—*Heb. vii. 25.*

THE pressing, urgent question with thousand
thousand anxious souls—overwhelmed with
the weight of aggravated transgression—is this,
—"Can this God-Man-Redeemer—this Surety-
substitute—be a Saviour for *all* indiscriminately?
shelter and refuge for others, can these Rock-
forts be open for the guiltiest?" It is the old
controversy that Satan has with many—whom
he first goads on to presumption, and then,
when entangled in his meshes, he seeks to drive
to despair. Many such has that implacable
warder shut up in the deepest dungeons of
"Doubting Castle"—gloomy cells, where the
sunlight is forbidden to enter—and rung over

them the knell of extinguished hope. The crushing thought of personal unworthiness—the memories of guilty bygone years, rise up before them like avenging angels. What! this Saviour and salvation for *me*—it cannot be! I have plunged madly into sin—not, like others because I have never been warned—never counselled,—never known the tenderness of a mother's prayers, nor the sanctity of a father's entreaties nor the privileges of a hallowed home. I have been oblivious of all these. Even now, I seem to listen (though in years long gone by), to voices which I have lived basely to scorn—to counsels I have trampled on;—the retrospect all the sadder by the reflection that the lips which spake them are hushed in the grave—and the arms that so old fondled me, as on Sabbath night I knelt by the loved knee, are mouldering in the tomb. What! Christ receive *me*, with all that diary of a misspent, godless, defiant life unveiled to His omniscient eye!—deeds of foul depravity—outbursts of fiery passion—malignant purposes of revenge—dishonourable shifts in business—un

dermining my neighbour and my friend's name and character to advance my own—secret crimes which have involved the ruin of the innocent :—my own bark fatally foundered,—but worse far than this, miserable wrecks for which I am guiltily responsible, strewing the shores. Mine is not, as it is with many, a mere upper layer of iniquity ; but it is deposit on deposit—strata piled on strata—the mournful consolidation of a life of sin ; ten thousand echoes ring along the dreary corridors of the past, “lost ! lost ! lost !” “Surely my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God.”*

Nay not so : aggravated as your case is, it is never hopeless ; you cannot hear your spiritual death-knell tolled, so long as you can read the golden letters which head this meditation,—“Able to save unto the uttermost.” You may have been to the uttermost a sinner : you may have gone the sickening round of all life's follies,

* Isa. xl. 27.

—run riot of its whole enchanted circle ; prodigal may have ever^d wallowed deeper in mire and morass than you. O Israel, mayest have destroyed thyself : there may not one redeeming feature in thy case—not gleanings left for the grape-gatherer : thou mayest be a stript, defenceless, degenerate Vine—fit for the axe and the cumberer's doom. hearken to the words of God,—“ In Me is *help*.” * “ I know the thoughts which I think towards you—thoughts of peace and not of evil.” “ I, even I, am He that blot out thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.” † “ I—even I”—very Being thou hast most deeply injured—very Spirit thou hast grieved—whose mercies thou hast scorned—I, the Almighty Creditor ready to grant and sign a full discharge,—“ that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out.” The Stronger than the strong man armed, sound the silver trumpet of jubilee, “ He hath sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound.”

* Hos. xiii. 9.

† Jer. xxix. 11.

‡ Isa. xliii. 25 ; xlv. 22.

§ John vi. 37.

ing of the prison to them that are bound."* And blessed have been the millions who have heard that joyful sound!

There is indeed one sin mentioned in Scripture, but only one, which debars any soul from the Saviour—the sin which is left purposely wrapt in its own undefined awful mystery—"the sin against the Holy Ghost!" But if there be, in the case of the most apparently hopeless, one breathing of penitence—one prayerful aspiration after a nobler being, then we believe we are warranted in saying, *that* which is called "the unpardonable sin" *you* have *not* committed. If you had, your heart would have been utterly impervious to conviction—all the avenues of conscience would have been closed. Like the fool spoken of by the Psalmist who has reached the climax of his hardihood, you would have remained callous and indifferent to every pleading voice, alike in Providence and grace—despising the credulous weakness of those around you

* Isa. lxi. 1.

who are listening to 'the idle tales,' and say your inmost heart—"No God for me!"* He far therefore you may have retrograded,—feeblest sigh of contrition be still heaved, monstrates that you are still a 'prisoner of and gives you encouragement to "turn stronghold." One warming beam of the Righteousness finding its way amid the frigid bergs of your moral being, is evidence sufficient that you are not left icebound in the wintry eternal desertion; in one word, that yours is the sin that is beyond the reach of forgiveness: that we are abundantly warranted to address now in the glorious words, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord: He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God: He will abundantly pardon." "Why standest thou still?" says Bunyan, in his "*Ferry Sinner Saved*:"—"arise. Why standest still? 'Begin at Jerusalem' is thy call

* So has the 1st verse of Psalm xiv. been appropriately rendered.

authority to come. Wherefore, up! and shoulder it, man! Say, Stand away, Devil, Christ calls me: stand away, unbelief, Christ calls me: stand away, all ye my desponding apprehensions, for my Saviour calls me to receive of His mercy."

Let us not, however, in these encouraging thoughts, be misunderstood. Let none say, If such be the gracious, unrestricted offer of the Gospel;—if Christ can save the vilest and the basest;—if He can save at the very verge and extremity of life, may I not live now as I please, and trust to His mercy at my deathbed? Nay. That Gospel of pardon and forgiveness is not for the future, it is for the present moment. The words are not "He SHALL be able to save to the uttermost," but "He IS able:"—not "he that SHALL believe," but "he that *believeth* shall be saved."* You can put no presumptuous reliance on a deferred repentance. Moreover, be assured, the farther you advance in wilful unbelief

* Mark xvi. 16.

and impenitence, the harder will it be to arrest on your downward course. The stone it descends from the mountain top, increases momentum and velocity. Each new bob takes, is alike greater and swifter, until a final leap it disappears. Every hour you live unsaved, you are bounding, like that with accelerated speed, down the dark precipice. The child's hand can stop in its course a snowball as it is loosened at the hill summit, but who could arrest its rush, when grown into an avalanche, it thunders onward from crag to crag towards the Valley. Add to this—by guilt and sumptuous delay, you miss the present joy and happiness of forgiveness:—the joy, while living through this world, while mingling with cares and duties and trials, of rising above all, under the elevating consciousness “I am forgiven;” and of joining in the sweet prayer—“O Lord, I will praise Thee, for Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me!” *

* Isa. xii. 1.

One other closing thought suggests itself, by laying emphasis on the first words of our motto—“HE is able to save.” Christ is not only a Saviour to the uttermost, but He is the *only* Saviour. Reject Him, and “there is no more offering for sin.” “Neither is there salvation in any other.” * “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” † How many are reluctant to accept of this truth in all its unqualified freeness. They would fain raise up something personal in the matter of their justification. They refuse to entrust to the great Physician their entire cure. They would gather some of the balm of Gilead with their own hands:—they would weave some of the web of merit on their own loom. Others would vaunt their *good* deeds, and make these excuse and palliate their *bad*; striking a balance between merit and demerit; presuming that by a law of moral compensation, the average will fully entitle them to God’s favour. Others hope to

* Acts iv. 12.

† 1 Cor. iii. 11.

meet the undischarged debt of the past and condone shortcomings by a better future, giving the promissory-note to the great Creditor, "Have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all."*

But what saith Jehovah? "I, even I, am the Lord, and *beside me* there is NO Saviour." Nothing dare come in the place of the *one* work of Immanuel. The giant deed of H *I* doing and dying must stand alone in its integrity, admitting neither substitute nor supplement. "Salvation," says the Psalmist (from first to last), "salvation belongeth unto God."† Those attempting to thrust in something of meritorious *self*, only put stumblingblocks in the king's highway. They only load the wings of the dove with needless encumbrances, — hamper and retard its flight to the clefts of the one Rock of safety. They are trusting their anchors, not to a chain of iron but to a hempen cord—a rope of tow. They are doing what will all be undone. They are ploughing

* Matt. xviii. 26.

† Isa. xliii. 11.

‡ Ps. iii. 8.

the sand only that it may collapse in its own furrow. They are labouring in the fire only to have the result of their toil consumed. They are building on the bough of the tree whose roots the winter flood is fast sapping, instead of having "their nest in a rock." "He *only*," says the Minstrel King, "is my Rock and my Salvation."* "Lord, save me, (else) I perish,"† said Peter, as, with sinking step, he turned his eye from the unstable billow to the Divine Being at his side. Perhaps it was with this Gennesaret memory recalled, that he could, long afterwards, proclaim to sceptic Jews and mocking heathen the noble confession of his faith: "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved."‡ Ah, when shall the self-deceived and self-satisfied learn, not to come, like Naaman, to the door of the true Elisha, with caparisoned horses and magnificent chariot filled with gifts, expecting to be told to do some "great thing?"—but ready, at the bidding of the

* Ps. lxxii. 6.

† Matt. xiv. 30.

‡ Acts iv. 12.

Gracious Physician, to go with their incurable leprosy straight to the waters of the living stream, and there "wash and be clean." "For every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk with money, and without price."*

Ye, then, who are wandering "in the wilderness in a solitary way," your soul fainting within you, mocked again and again with the mirage of the hollow nothingness of this painted world ; ye, perhaps, whose wilderness experience is different ; the hot blinding wind of trial unexpectedly overtaking you, strewing your caravan on the desert sands, and leaving priceless treasures hidden from your sight—oh turn from the perishable to the imperishable ; turn from torn tent and shattered canvas to the only secure shelter, saying, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted."† Thousands on thousands, with dro

* Isa. lv. 1.

† Ps. xviii. 46.

ing wing and wailing cry, have flown for refuge beyond the storm-clouds of earth to these glorious Rock-clefts, and yet there is room ; pardon for all, peace for all, heaven for all. Hear the sainted multitude, as, in garments whiter than snow, they cast their crowns before the throne and pour forth their eternal anthem to the *one* Saviour—"THOU wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." *

* Rev. v. 9.

Christ Risen.

- "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life."—*John* xi. 25.
- "And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—*Matt.* xxviii. 5, 6.
- "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him."—*Rom.* vi. 9.
- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."—*1 Pet.* i. 3.
- "Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."—*1 Pet.* i. 21.
- "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."—*1 Cor.* xv. 20.
- "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."—*1 Cor.* xv. 23.
- "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—*Col.* iii. 1.
- "THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED."—*Luke* xxiv. 34.

"But chiefly are we bound to praise Thee, for the glorious Resurrection of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for He is the very Paschal Lamb that was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world: who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."
—*Book of Common Prayer.*

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XII.

"THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED."—*Luke* xxiv. 34.

AMONG the many Rock-clefts of the believer's trust, pre-eminent in importance and value is the Resurrection of Jesus, forming as it does the crowning proof of the Redeemer's divine mission.

In the hour indeed of deepest humiliation, when pouring out His life's blood on the cross, there were not wanting signs and prodigies which evidenced and proclaimed His Godhead glory. There were wondrous symbols in the heavens, and strange convulsions on earth. The sheeted dead rose from their graves. The High Priest was disturbed in his devotions by the mysterious rending of the temple-veil. The sun was palled in darkness as if his race were prematurely run. But, along with these, there were also startling contrasts. His marred visage is still, in death.

He who saved others seems powerless to save Himself ; He has perished with a felon's excruciating torture. The funeral obsequies are over. He who raised others from the tomb, is Himself laid lifeless in the sepulchre. The stone is rolled to the mouth of the cave, and the fond hopes of the disconsolate disciples seem crushed for ever — " We trusted it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." * But on the third day the Divine Conqueror rose triumphant. The glad tidings are circulated from lip to lip, " The Lord is risen indeed ;" † and from that memorable moment He was declared in apostolic teaching to be " the Son of God with power, *by the resurrection from the dead.*" ‡ As this was the most important fact of all the incidents of the incarnation to have established on clear and decisive evidence (Christianity as a system must stand or fall with it), so did God provide that it should be accredited and authenticated by " infallible proofs."

* Luke xxiv. 21.

† Luke xxiv. 34.

‡ Rom

Let us in a few words enumerate these.

The Jewish authorities made sure His sepulchre. It was a sepulchre hewn out of a rock: ingress being thus impossible, save by the one entrance. A band of Roman soldiers were stationed around it, to whom sleeping on watch would have been dishonour and death. A clear passover moon, too, defied the abstracting of the body by stealth in the dark. And with regard to the testimony of the disciples, it is incredible, when all the circumstances are weighed, that they could be either deceivers or self-deceived. What motive could a handful of illiterate, unsophisticated men have had, in surreptitiously possessing themselves of a dead body, and upholding an imposture? What possibly could induce them to circulate and uphold a cunningly devised fable, when persecution and imprisonment was their only recompense for doing so? Peter had more than once shown a craven spirit. What could have made this Feeble-heart become "bold as a lion," if we resolve that boldness into

a mission through the world to defend a lie, and at last to be crucified, as tradition asserts, in more cruel form and with more intense physical suffering than his Master? And the same equally true with regard to all the others. There was nothing conceivable for these unlettered simple-hearted fishermen to gain, by propagating an enormous falsehood. It could bring them neither riches, nor worldly influence, nor renown. It would infallibly draw down upon them scorn and contempt, if not bonds and suffering and death;—martyrdom, as in the case of James, with the sword—long exile and lonely banishment as in the case of John. Paul, too, like “one born out of due time,” had surrendered all his hopes of earthly distinction to uphold the fact of a risen Saviour. Wonderfully does he unfold and vindicate the cardinal article of his creed, in that noble treatise on the Resurrection, contained in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians. His pleadings are not the pleadings of a suborned advocate—who was propping up a desperate and unwinnable cause—it is the grand exposition of the

would stake his all, aye, life itself, on his fervid heartfelt utterances.

While they had thus no conceivable object in deceiving others, it is equally impossible and improbable that the apostles could themselves have been deceived. It is true they were plain men, but they were no fanatics. They were just such a jury as in this country would enlist our confidence, in submitting a case for decision, which required no more than the testimony of their senses and average powers of discrimination. Though unskilled in the world's wisdom and philosophy and science, they possessed honest minds, capable of taking broad and common-sense views of things. And if some would aver, that, as the disciples of Christ who had accompanied with Him, they were likely to be biassed in their opinions, and more disposed than others to be credulous,—we know from their own conduct, on the day of alleged resurrection, that it was not so: rather the reverse. They were slow to believe:—their faith had been shattered by the crucifixion-scene. When the Risen Lord ap-

peared, not a few doubted ; * others denounced the wondrous tidings of a vacant sepulchre as " idle tales ; " † one would not give his assent until he could have tangible evidence of the fact. Not till he had touched the gash of the spear and the holes in the hands and feet, would he renounce his incredulity, and give in his adherence as he did, by the emphatic utterance, " My Lord and my God. " ‡ Add to this, for the space of forty days after the resurrection, they had been familiar with their Lord's presence—so familiar, as to make sure of His personal identity. Their eyes had seen—their ears had heard—their hands had handled the Word of Life ; enabling them to give the united testimony (James, Cephas, the twelve, the " five hundred brethren at once "), " This Jesus God hath raised up, whereof we ALL are witnesses. " § In truth, few historical facts are so well authenticated ; and those who refuse to admit its evidence as sufficient, must be incredulous and sceptical about other remarkable

* Matt. xxviii. 17.

‡ John xx. 28.

† Luke xxiv. 11.

§ Acts ii. 32.

events in the world, based and established on ordinary data. Reject the truth of the Resurrection because the evidence is inadequate, and the annals of the past must become a blank ; sceptical on this, we must be sceptical on the most important incidents of profane history. Xenophon and Herodotus, Tacitus and Livy, Gibbon and Macaulay, need not have written. Their facts are myths—and the last four thousand years of the world are a chaos.

From what we have said, then, we may cease to marvel at the pre-eminent importance assigned by the inspired writers to this great sheet-anchor of the Church's faith. From the frequency with which they allude to it, even the peerless truth, *Christ crucified*, seems to give way in their estimate to *Christ risen*. And for this reason, as we shall subsequently show, that the one would be valueless without the other. The glorious light, illuminating the tomb of Jesus, throws its radiations on almost every other doctrine of the Christian system. The believer's justification, regeneration, sanctification, resurrection, glorification,

—each has its halo of glory borrowed from the a vacant sepulchre. “*The Resurrection*” seen s, with the sacred penmen, to be the article of f a standing or a falling faith. “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”* “And with great power gave the apostles witness of *the Resurrection* of the Lord Jesus.”† Paul, to his cultured auditory on Mars’ Hill, preached “Jesus and *the Resurrection*.” “It is Christ,” says he, “who died, YEA RATHER who is *risen again*.”‡ Once more, in the concluding benediction of the great Epistle to the Hebrews, it is the Redeemer’s Resurrection which is specially singled out as the mightiest of God’s mighty acts: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His

* I Cor. xv. 14.

† Acts iv. 33.

‡ Rom. viii. 34.

rough Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory and ever. Amen." *

shall cease to wonder at the relative importance assigned by the apostles to this soul-doctrine, when we briefly glance at *three*, the many glorious truths, which cluster about it.

was the public token of the Father's acceptance of the work of Christ. God, by thus raising Him from the place of the dead, and not suffering Him to see corruption, expressed His full qualified satisfaction with the great atonement. At the commencement of His ministry, He had given public attestation of His divine mission by the heavenly voice and descent of the dove. He would now at once give visible demonstration that the great oblation was accepted, and that the great cry, "It is finished," uttered on earth, was heard and ratified in Heaven. "Christ

* Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

was raised up from the dead *by the glory of the Father.*"* The demands and penalties of the law having been discharged and fulfilled by His obedience unto death, it was now consistent with the honour of the Father's name, that "His Beloved should be delivered," that "He should save with His right hand and hear Him."† The Surety-Substitute descended into the lonesome prison-house of the grave. The new tomb enclosed Him within its rocky cavern. If one single sin had remained unatoned for, the stone would to this hour have remained sealed, and the hopes of untold millions been buried along with the Captive. Death stormed the citadel. For a moment its walls trembled under the assaulting foe, and the Divine Vanquisher seemed the vanquished. But it was only by His heel the serpent touched—no more! He had completed the work which the Father had given Him to do. He could not be holden of death. The superincumbent stone (befitting

* Rom. vi. 4.

† Ps. lx. 5.

bol of a violated law) has been rolled away, two white-robed angels are seated in the rted tomb, to tell the glad news, "*The Lord sen!*" The believer can now triumphantly aim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our l Jesus Christ, who, according to His abund- nery, hath begotten us again unto a lively : by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from lead."* Satan, death, and hell, are chained rophies to the wheels of His conquering iot. He leads these "captive multitudes ive;" taking from them all the armour rein they trusted, and dividing the spoils. ve behold Him, on that early morning of a dispensation, carrying in his hand the iron n of the King of Terrors,—a voice proceed- from the excellent glory seems to repeat old assurance, "This is my Beloved Son, in m I am well pleased."† "Lord of Life and y," says Bishop Hall, "is there any weak that makes doubt of Thy plenary satis-

* 1 Pet. i. 3.

† Matt. iii. 17.

faction for his sin ; of the perfect accomplishment of the great work of man's Redemption : . . . Thou raisedst Thyself from the dead : quitting that prison of the grave whence Thou couldst not have come, till Thou hadst paid *all*." Or as Bishop Reynolds similarly expresses it, "Therefore the Lord sent an angel to remove the stone from the mouth of the Sepulchre ; not to supply any want of power in Him, who could Himself have rolled away the stone with one of His fingers ; but as a judge, when the law is satisfied, sendeth an officer to open the prison doors to him who hath made that satisfaction, so the Father, to testify that His justice was fully satisfied with the price which the Son had paid, sent an officer from heaven to open the doors of the grave, and, as it were, to hold away the hangings, while his Lord came forth from His bed-chamber."

II. Almost identical with this view, and arising out of it, *the Resurrection of Jesus was a pledge of the believer's complete justification.* In *mani-*

l passages of the New Testament a 'one-
s' is represented as existing between Christ

His Church. Every notable official act in
Incarnation was performed by Him in His
ral character, as our covenant Head and
representative. When He died, it was reckoned
f His people had died with Him. "I am
ified," says the apostle, "with Christ."*
eckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto
'† And when the buried Saviour rises vic-
ous from the grave, the Church, His mys-
l body, is represented as rising with Him.
ried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye
risen with Him, through the faith of the
ration of God, who hath raised Him from the
d."‡ And again, to the same effect, believers
spoken of, as being "quickenened together
i Christ."§

As our adorable Redeemer left behind Him
His tomb the mementoes of victory, so the
ever, by virtue of this union with his Lord,

* Gal. ii. 20.

† Rom. vi. 11.

‡ Col. ii. 12.

§ Ephes. ii. 5.

becomes a partaker in the same great Easter triumph. With every fetter of condemnation struck off his limbs, every brand of condemnation effaced from his soul, he walks forth "alive from the dead:" claiming as the glorious security of his new resurrection-life, that because Christ lives he shall live also.* Thus God the Father, by raising the Living Head, sets His seal to the pardon and justification of all the members. "He was delivered for our offences, and *raised again for our justification.*"† Yes, coming to the empty grave of Jesus, we can see in these scattered trophies the pledge and guarantee of our own spiritual emancipation. Written on that tomb are the words—"It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" However much we may delight to stand under the shadow of Calvary's Cross, and listen to the Conqueror's dying words, declaring the work finished and the victory won;—with no less holy but rather augmented interest do

* John xiv. 19.

† Rom. iv. 25.

Ye approach the mouth of the sepulchre, there
be the privileged auditors of tidings fraught
with everlasting consolation—"He is not here,
He is risen, as He said; come, see the place
where the Lord lay."*

Reader, remember too, in the light of that
sepulchre, that yours is a *completed* justifi-
cation. By virtue of your living union with
our living Saviour, your acceptance with God
not a question that remains indeterminate and
unsettled. It *has* been settled;—the accounts
have been closed—the debt liquidated. "Now,"
says the apostle, "if we be dead with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with Him.
Knowing that Christ being raised from the
dead, dieth no more. Death hath no more
dominion over Him. For in that He died,
He died unto sin once—but in that He liveth,
He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also
ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin—but
live unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."†

* Matt. xxviii. 6.

† Rom. vi. 11.

Standing with your feet on that displaced grave-stone, and your eye heavenwards, you can join with Paul in challenging the heights above, and the depths beneath, ever again to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord.*

III.—*The Resurrection of Jesus was a pledge and earnest of the Resurrection of His people.* "If a man die, will he live again?" is a problem insoluble by natural religion. What is called the argument from analogy, when we come rigidly to sift it, is really at best not an argument. It is an illustration, a corroboration, no more. To take two well-known and familiar instances.† The husbandman casts his seed into the furrow:—these handfuls of seed, laid in winter in an earthy sepulchre, rise in spring exultant from their tomb. Nay, more, they become, in harvest, fields of yellow corn a hundredfold

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

† I take these two illustrations, as selected and put by a Writer who has handled this subject with his accustomed power. See *Rev. F. W. Robertson's Sermons*, 2d Series, p. 308.

multiplied. Can analogy fairly point to this, a triumphant demonstration and prophecy of a body's resurrection? It is a type of it—not no *proof* of it. And why? Because that sown seed, or rather each individual grain, *not dead*. Inert, lifeless though it *seems* to be, it has within it the germinating principle—a latent element of vitality. The earth of the field into which it is cast is not its grave. It is the nurturing home of a still living thing, and the clods of the valley only serve to foster its development. Or look at the example of the rapid chrysalis, which in summer starts into resurrection beauty in the form of the butterfly. That chrysalis, too, inanimate as it seems, is not lifeless. Vitality is within the repulsive shell. It is in a dormant state. No more. It only waits the return of summer suns and summer skies, to awake from its sleep of darkness and begin its winged existence.

But it is altogether different with the body of man laid in the grave. The analogy is imperfect: rather, it completely fails. There is here

no dormant state—no mere condition of torpor. It is utter death—decay—dissolution ;—brotherhood and sisterhood with the worm and corruption. It is dust resolved into dust—ashes resolved into ashes—earth resolved into earth! Thus, however suggestive these be as illustrations (and we are abundantly warranted to take them as such*), they form no proof whatever of the certainty of the body's future and final resuscitation. They are beautiful guesses of a great truth culled from the Volume of Nature: but that is all. And when the solemn question is propounded over the grave—"Son of Man, can these bones live?"—Reason can give no more—natural theology can give no more—than the modest

* We find our own great traveller employing the latter analogy in addressing the Bechuanas of Africa. "A large caterpillar called 'Nato,' when about to pass into the *chrysalis* state, buries itself in the soil, and is sometimes sought for as food even then. If left undisturbed, it comes forth a beautiful butterfly. The transmutation was sometimes employed by me with good effect, when speaking with the natives, as an illustration of our own great change and resurrection."—*Dr Livingstone's "Missionary Travels in South Africa,"* p. 54.

answer of the prophet—"O Lord God, Thou knowest."

But coming to the grave of Jesus, there we have the problem solved. The Great Abolisher of death hath brought life and immortality to light. We hear Him proclaiming, "I am the resurrection and the life,"* and the gladdening truth is caught up and echoed by one after another of the "glorious company of the apostles." "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies."† "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him."‡ "Begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."§ "Who by Him do believe in God, who raised Him up from the dead."|| "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."¶ The First fruits—either as a sheaf, or the earliest gatherings of the harvest—were of old taken with pomp and rejoicing to the Jewish temple,

* John xi. 25.

† Rom. viii. 11.

‡ Rom. vi. 9.

§ 1 Peter i. 3.

|| 1 Peter i. 21.

¶ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

and "waived" there "as an offering before the Lord"—the pledge alike of corn-crop and vintage ere long to follow. So has the Divine 'Sheaf' (if we can venture, with reverence, to apply the symbol) been waived in the Heavenly Temple, the earnest of a coming harvest of immortal redeemed spirits, the fruit of His soul-travail. Nor is it unworthy of note, that there was a remarkable correspondence between the olden Israelitish type and the antitype. The offering of the first fruits of barley harvest among the Jews, took place on "the morrow after the Sabbath"* *i.e.*, on the third day after the passover. Jesus was crucified on the passover-day. He was laid in His grave on the Jewish passover Sabbath. But on the third morn He rose †—the very day in which these first fruits of the land were offered in the temple. As the type was being presented in the earthly court the angels were bearing to the Heavenly the tidings

* Lev. xxiii. 11.

† See Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," *Art.* "First" and Dr Bonar's "Leviticus," *in loco*.

f a risen Antitype. They carried the First sheaf, the glorious pledge of a mighty harvest-gathering in the morning of the general Resurrection, when 'the Church throughout all the world,'—the vast family of the ransomed from earliest to latest times,—would be assembled before the supreme tribunal, to listen to the words of the enthroned Judge, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me!"* It was that Resurrection hour for which Jesus Himself is represented as longing from all eternity, when pillowed on the Father's bosom. Then He joyed "according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil."† He seems to bound over intervening ages; and with His eye first

His own vacant tomb, and then on the myriads His Resurrection foreshadowed, He represented as exclaiming—"I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy foe! O grave, I will be thy destruction!"‡ No

Heb. ii. 13.

† Isa. ix. 3.

‡ Hos. xiii. 14.

wonder that the Resurrection of Christ has been for the last 1800 years a joyful day,—that our Sabbaths are its solemn commemorations. It was the truth of all truths among the primitive believers. It was not the day of His *death* they made their Sabbath, but the First day of the week ;—the day when the sadness of the weeping women at the sepulchre was turned into gladness : and their watchword at meeting (the word of gratulation and welcome) was not “ the Lord has *died*,” but “ the Lord has *risen*.” It was with them a day of praise, more than for confession ; for psalms of thanksgiving, more than for penitential tears. Conscious that a new and nobler *Genesis* had dawned on a benighted world, they sung in responsive melody, “ This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.” The earnest of the outer material creation are welcome and joyful. If we hail with grateful spirit the first budding of early spring in grove and field, because in these we see the earnest and pledge that soon nature will be arrayed in her full robes of resurrection beauty ;—with

What feelings ought we to stand by the sepulchre of our Lord, and see the buried Conqueror rising triumphant over the last enemy! Do we not behold in Him, the harbinger of an immortal spring-time, or rather a glorious harvest, when the mounds of the earth, and the caves of the nether world, shall surrender what they have held for ages in sacred custody, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision:"* when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality," and the summons shall go forth, "Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust."† Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming!"‡

Not satisfied with His own Resurrection as a pledge of His people's, Jesus gave, in the course of His ministry on earth, four striking confirmations or attestations to the same gospel truth; and as has been noted, there is an impressive and significant sequence in these four successive instances of victory over death.§ The first was in the case

ii. 14. † Isa. xxvi. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 23.

§ See *Butler's Sermons*, I Series, p. 55.

of Jairus' daughter. She was "now dead ;"* the last enemy had only just gained his triumph. The second was the case of the son of the widow of Nain—"He was carried out"†—death had for two days put his icy brand on the pale brow. The third is the case of Lazarus, a farther step in the progression—"he hath been dead four days"‡—corruption begun. The final case was on the occasion of the commencing Easter of the Church, when from the graves which had previously been opened by the quaking earth and rending rocks, "many bodies of the saints which slept arose."§ If the proof had rested with these four illustrative instances of resurrection, we might still have been staggered. They were only temporary resuscitations—no more. They effected only a respite from the iron grasp of the King of Terrors. Lazarus and his restored compeers had the gloomy portals a second time to enter:—these withered flowers were revived only to decay:—their dust is probably at this

* Matt. ix. 18.

† John xi. 39.

‡ Luke vii. 12.

§ Matt. xxvii. 52.

moment reposing in one of the Valleys around Jerusalem. But the great Conqueror dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. He carried away with Him for ever the gates of Hades. "Thou wilt not leave My soul in the place of the dead, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption." *

Come then, believer, enter into this cleft of the Rock. How it disarms death of all its terrors, to hear the unconquered Lord of Life proclaiming through the bars of the grave, "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death." † In Adam, the first federal head, we are hereditary bondsmen ;—"in Adam all die." But in our second Head, the Lord from heaven, "shall all be made alive." ‡ The grave is converted into a bed of repose, where the sleeping but redeemed dust "rests in hope."

* Ps. xvi. 10.

† Rev. i. 18.

‡ I Cor. xv. 22.

Ye who have priceless treasures in the tomb think of this! "So He giveth His beloved to sleep"—"them also which sleep in Jesus God bring with Him."† True, that "house of our earthly tabernacle" at death, is "darksome ruin." That dust is resolved into its kindred dust. The constituent elements of the dismantled framework are incorporated with new forms of matter. Sad and terribly true is dissolution in all its accompaniments. We do not wish to strew that dismal path with flowers. Death, from the earthly view of it, is not irradiated by one gleam of sunshine. It is a slow and gradual wasting and decay, the fading of the bloom from the cheek, the languor of the eye, the wearisome days, the long night-vigils, the mind participating in slow degrees with the wreck of the body, memory often a total blank, even the fondest look and the fondest name eliciting no response! Then the close of all—the silent chamber, where "echo slumbers;" the noiseli-

* Ps. cxxvii. 2.

† 1 Thess. iv. 14.

ootfall, the mute crowd of mourners, the grave, the return to the silent dwelling, and the vacant seat:—O Death, truly *here* is thy sting; O Grave, truly *here* is thy victory! But the day is coming when all these memories of woe shall vanish, like the darkness before the morning sun. When the spoil of plundering ages shall in a mysterious way be all restored:—when, as in the Prophet's Valley of Vision, bone shall come to bone, and sinew to sinew; the old loving smiles of earth will be seen again in the newly glorified body, purged from all the dross and alloy of its old materialism—the drooping withered flower reviving, beauteous and fragrant with the bloom of immortality.

But for the Death and Resurrection of Christ and the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection eternal life in Him, how cheerless, how repulsive would be every thought of the grave. How might well shrink from all its associations, make the very mention of the name of loved a proscribed and forbidden theme: saying, grieve them, as soon as may be, into cheerless-

oblivion : let them sleep on in their clay unremembered ; draw close the grassy around them : whisper not that word in ear, it only brings memories of dark annihilation !

Nay, nay—talk not of the living as are dead. “Weep not ;” he or she “is not sleeping !” “Why weepest thou ?” a question of the risen Conqueror, as He gazes with a tear-dimmed eye on His Resurrection. The Christian’s grave need be watered with tears ; for Jesus hath converted it into the bulwark of heaven, the robing-room for immortal life. Oh ! to live as “the children of the resurrection,” as those who are waiting for their Heavenly Father’s final adoption—“To wit *the rearing of our bodies.*” * We know not the consoling presence of the higher natures of the invisible world ; what are those angel-forms which move in the air on their less errands and ministries of holy love to glorify God’s pleasure. But no elevation of the

* Rom. viii. 23.

mortal being can be higher than that of those, who, from dust, are destined to spring into union (we had almost said assimilation) with deity, "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." * No more shall there be the elements of decay; no more "the sentence of death in themselves;" no furrow ploughed on the cheek, no wrinkle of age on the brow; but when stars shall fall from their orbits, and worlds succumb to the present laws of decadence, they shall still be in the immortal youth of undying life.

* Phil. iii. 21.

Christ Ascended.

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive : Thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD might dwell among them."—*Ps. lxxviii. 18.*

"A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and shall see Me; because I go to the Father."—*John xvi. 16.*

"If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father."—*John xiv. 28.*

"Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and ye also ascend to My Father; and to My God, and your God."—*John xx. 17.*

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany; and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—*Luke xxiv. 51.*

"Received up into glory."—*1 Tim. iii. 16.*

"HE THAT DESCENDED IS THE SAME ALSO THAT ASCENDED UP FAR ABOVE ALL HEAVENS, THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS."—*Eph. iv. 10.*

"I ascend to My Father and your Father." You may observe that He reminds them not so much of what He had been doing for them. He says not, 'Tell them I have been dying for them, and they little think what I have suffered for them.' Not a word of that neither; but still His heart and His care is upon doing more. Having now despatched that great work on earth for them, He sends them word that He is hastening to Heaven as fast as He can, to do another."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

"Surely, if the inhabitants of those celestial mansions may be capable of any increase of joy, they then both found and showed it, when they saw and welcomed Thee, entering in Thy glorified humanity, into that Thy eternal palace of blessedness. And if there could be any higher or sweeter ditty than Hallelujah, it was then sung by the choir of angels and saints."—*Bishop Hall, 1574.*

XIII.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"HE THAT DESCENDED IS THE SAME ALSO
THAT ASCENDED UP FAR ABOVE ALL
HEAVENS, THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL
THINGS."—*Eph. iv. 10.*

WE have listened in our last, to the glorious tidings, another echo from the Rock of Ages—" *The Lord has risen !*" We have stood in thought by the entrance to the vacant sepulchre ; seen the stone rolled away, and angel-warders telling of Him " Whom God hath raised up ; having loosed the pains of death ; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."*

When the now re-assured disciples were fully certified of the amazing fact, may we not well imagine that the thought which would suggest itself to their minds, dominating all others,

* Acts ii. 24.

would be this—"Is He now to remain with us?" Is the adorable presence of this Conqueror of death to be vouchsafed as a permanent inheritance and boon to His Church? Nay, further, Is the time now arrived for the oft-predicted Messianic reign, when we, as His privileged assessors, are to be seated on twelve thrones—the tribal heads in a new and more blessed theocracy?

No. Strange and startling, surely, the first message must have been which the Risen One sends them. He bids the weeping disconsolate Mary dry her own tears and theirs, but not with the gladdening assurance that He is now to continue for ever in their midst, as a Friend and Guide, to cheer them with His fellowship, and animate them with the tones of His living voice. He sends rather the unexpected announcement—that He must speedily leave them:—"Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I *ascend* unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God."* Accordingly, as is

* John xx. 17.

minutely described in the sacred narrative, after remaining with His infant Church for forty days subsequent to His resurrection—thus affording His followers ample time and opportunity to have their convictions established, on irrefragable evidence, regarding the reality of that great event;—and after giving all requisite instructions relative to the proclamation of His Gospel and the extension of His Church and kingdom, the Divine Master led His more privileged disciples out “as far as to Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them—and it came to pass that while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.”*

Let us enter this new “Cleft of the rock;” and under its shelter, meditate on the grounds of confidence and joy which the believer has in the contemplation of his Lord’s Ascension. In doing so, let us state and endeavour to illustrate, two leading and prominent reasons among others, why it was thus necessary and expedient

* Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

that He should "go away;"—why it behoved, not only that Christ should have "suffered these things," but also to have "entered into His glory."*

I. The Ascension of Christ *formed the divine attestation to the full completion of His mediatorial work.* We have already seen, among other great truths which cluster around the Resurrection, that it may be regarded as a public declaration on the part of the Father, that the wages of sin were all paid—that the penalty of the law had been borne in the person of the Surety-Substitute, who was "delivered for our offence, and raised again for our justification."†

But legal release from the condemning sentence of the law, was not the whole which the Redeemer undertook in the salvation of His Church. It was indeed a vast part of it,—to have the chains struck off, the prison-doors opened, and the glorious words pronounced,

* Luke xxiv. 26.

† Rom. iv. 25.

“There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”* The work undertaken by the Great Surety from all eternity had, however, far more stupendous issues. It contemplated nothing short of recovering to man ALL that he had lost and forfeited by the fall. Not only was the flaming sword of the cherubim to be turned away, or quenched in the blood of His cross, but the closed gates of a better than earthly Paradise were to be re-opened. Not only was the divine law to be vindicated and magnified; but the divine love—that love which bathed in sunlight-beams the groves of the first Eden—was to be restored, and the happiness of that endearing intercourse revived, when “the voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” In one word, Paradise lost was to be Paradise regained. Having overcome the sharpness of death, the great Forerunner was to open the Kingdom of heaven to all believers.

* Rom. viii. 1.

How was this glorious achievement—the resurrection of the dead—certified? The Resurrection of Christ from the dead constituted the public evidence and testimony of the remission of their sins,—so His entrance into heaven was to form the pledge and guarantee of His people's final glorification. We have already seen, that in all the more prominent and important events of His previous ministry on earth, the adorable Redeemer stood as the Representative of His people; that they were identified with Him—reckoned as participants in His mediatorial work. When He died, it was legally counted as if they had died along with Him;—when He rose, as if they had risen along with Him. So now when He ascended, it was also in His federal or representative character as the Vicar of His Church. Believers, members of His mystical body, though still in earth's "Valley of Vision" amid sin, corruption and death, to grapple with temptation—are yet, again and again, as in Scripture, as if they had already rec-

anticipation in the Person of their Head) the great covenanted reward ;—already been “ made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Let the following passages in proof suffice—“ Who HATH raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” * “ For our conversation (or citizenship) is in Heaven.” † “ Ye *are* come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God—to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” ‡ “ Who HATH made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.” §

We rejoice, indeed, to contemplate in the ascension of the Redeemer, the meet reward of His own sufferings and humiliation—the fulfilment of His own last prayer, “ Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine ownself with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” || “ When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” ¶ “ Sat down”—a significant figure—

* Ephes. ii. 6.

† Phil. iii. 20.

‡ Heb. xii. 22.

§ Rev. i. 6.

|| John xvii. 5.

¶ Heb. i. 3.

the emblem of rest. The mighty work is done— the Victor is reposing at the close of the campaign :—" His rest shall be glorious." But it is more than this. We see in Him the Precursor of a mighty multitude which no man can number, who, in His ascension and glorification, have the pledge and prelude and earnest of their own.

To take a feeble earthly simile. A brave leader, in capturing a city, takes possession of it, not for himself, but in the name of the Sovereign and of his or her people. So does the Divine ascending Conqueror, in entering the Heavenly Jerusalem, take possession of it in the name of His Church on earth—"the Queen" who is yet to "stand at His right hand in gold of Ophir."* The words of the Prophet, in which he speaks of the members, we may apply for a moment, in part, to their great Head;—"He shall enter," says Isaiah, "into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking

* Ps. xlv. 9.

* Is.

His uprightness."* He, their Representative, enters into His own purchased peace—the enjoyment of His stipulated reward. And they" (they His people) "shall rest!" Their work too is done; for He hath done it for them; and if they have not yet entered, like their precursor, into the realms of heavenly peace—the night of earth must intervene before the morning break—they may "rest in their beds" and dream of a glorious day-dawn—even of walking in the uprightness" of their crowned and exalted Redeemer;—waiting for the joyous hour when His voice will be heard—"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust."† One in mystical union now, they can anticipate the hour, when they shall be one in full vision and union, and so be "ever with the Lord."

And, moreover, as it is God the Father who is represented as the efficient Agent in all the previous parts and stages of the Redeemer's mediatorial work—"God so loved the world"‡—

* Isa. lvii. 2.

† Isa. xxvi. 19.

‡ John iii. 16.

"Whom *God* hath set forth to be a propitiation
 —"It pleased *the Lord* to bruise Him"†——
 "Whereof *He* hath given assurance unto all men
 in that *He* hath raised Him from the dead:"‡——
 so this same adorable First person in the Ever-
 Blessed Trinity, is described as setting *His*
 seal to the great public act of *ascension* and
enthronement—welcoming, in the Person of *the*
 Representative Head, all the believing members.
 "HE hath set Him at His own right hand in
 heavenly places"§ "Wherefore *God* also hath
 highly exalted Him, and given Him a name *that*
 is above every name."|| When we hearken, there-
 fore, to the Father saying to His Divine Son—
 "Sit Thou on My right hand"—we listen, in
 that coronation welcome, to more than a per-
 sonal address. We hear in it the authority
 addressed to His Church for the glorification
 of all its members;—that they are served heirs
 in *Him* to their regal honours;—that as *now*
 (to use a law term) they are *de jure*—so *ere*

* Rom. iii. 25.

† Isa. liii. 10.

‡ Acts xvii. 31.

§ Eph. i. 20.

|| Phil. ii. 9.

ing, *de facto*, will they be in possession of the promised reward. "With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought—they shall enter into the King's palace."* It is the Father welcoming the Elder and the Prodigal Son home, within the patrimonial halls. As He looks to the once ragged and tattered outcast, now wearing the best robe and jewelled ring and glittering sandals, and then from Him to a fiercer "Elder Brother" than that depicted in the parable, even the Divine Being who had brought back the wanderer from spiritual misery and death to blessedness and life—He claims, "Son, Thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is Thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad—for this Thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."†

II. Another special reason for Christ's Ascension, was in order that *the gift of the Holy Spirit*

* Ps. xlv. 15.

† Luke xv. 31, 32.

might be conferred upon the Church. When that first intimation to His disciples of His approaching departure fell from the Saviour's lips, we may picture to ourselves the agonizing feelings of the attached and loving band. 'What!' would doubtless have been their exclamation, had their individual and united thought found utterance in words. 'What! Go away! Can it be that these brief years of sacred and devout intercourse are to vanish like a dream? Can it be that we are to be severed from Him who has been to us better than the best of masters and the fondest of parents?—that we are to be left as sheep without a shepherd, orphaned, forlorn, in a desolate world? This is death indeed.' Stranger still, perhaps, would be the first impression made by the words in which the sudden announcement was conveyed. "It is *expedient*." * How can it possibly be so? How can it possibly be *better*, for us, timid and inexperienced mariners, to be left without

* John xvi. 7.

our Pilot to buffet these stormy seas? How can it be better for us, a helpless and trembling flock, to be deprived of the Great Pastor's presence; abandoned to grapple, as best we can, with the briars and thorns of the wilderness? How often has He sought that among us which was lost, and brought again that which was driven away, and bound that which was broken, and strengthened that which was sick!* When the storm was gathering overhead, and the wolf was prowling on our path, we had this sure *cleft*—the shadow of this "Great Rock" ever to lean to, for safety and repose. But now, we shall be left unsheltered and unsuccoured in the dark and cloudy day! Oh, need we wonder that as the Divine Redeemer, on the vision referred to, looked around on the faces and, perhaps, tear-dimmed eyes that at that moment met His own, He said, "And because I have said these

* Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts." *

But having stated the startling fact, He proceeds to assign one very special reason for this departure and its expediency—viz., that there was a divine Agent, a heavenly Paraclete, to come in His stead—whose presence in the Church would indemnify, and more than indemnify, for His own absence. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."† In His valedictory discourse, again and again does He revert to the same cheering truth. As there is often some one prominent thought which fills the mind of a dying parent when he gathers his children around his couch, some one special charge which he endeavours by reiteration vividly to impress on their memories: so does this coming of "the Comforter" seem to

* John xvi. 6. See this thought expanded in Dr Buchanan's work on "The Holy Spirit."

† John xvi. 7.

the leading thought or theme of consolation which the Redeemer fondly dwells, as His dying hour approaches.

The advent of the glorious Third person in the adorable Trinity is elsewhere, in more passages than one, said to be contingent or dependent on the Saviour's departure. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." * No sooner did the ascension take place, than the bereft men of Galilee returned from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem, to wait, according to the last injunction of their ascending Lord, "for the promise of the Father." † Day after day they continued in profound expectancy of its fulfilment. In the little room—the upper chamber—where the infant Church was gathered—ofttimes, we may well believe, would the cry ascend, 'Lord, fulfil Thy gracious assurance! Didst Thou not say, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more

* John vii. 39.

† Acts i. 4.

will your Father which is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."* Remember this word unto Thy servants, upon which Thou hast caused them to hope!'

And there were more reasons than one for their anxiety. The advent of the Paraclete would confer new spiritual powers on themselves;—communicating superhuman strength for their gigantic labours, out of weakness making them strong, giving efficacy to their teaching, opening hard hearts and prejudiced intellects and seared consciences to the mighty truths of the Gospel—in one word, inspiring them with the certainty of success in an otherwise hopeless enterprise. But more than this:—It was of the last importance to have some outward and even miraculous attestation to the fact of the Saviour's ascension. These disciples had been the witnesses of His humiliation, some of them had been present at His baptism in the Jordan, others at His agony in the Garden,

* Luke xi. 13.

His death on Calvary; they had climbed
e by slow incredulous steps) to a firm
ance of His Resurrection. All these mo-
ous facts had, moreover, been authenticated
accredited by heavenly signs and witnesses,
: descent of the dove and the voice at His
sm—the angels strengthening Him in His
y—the rocks rending, the graves open-
and the heavens darkening at His cruci-
—the angels in white sitting within His
it grave. But now He had vanished from
view!—a cloud had received Him out of
sight. He had told them He was about
scend to His Father and their Father.
r had accompanied Him to Bethany; they
seen His glorified shape borne upwards
ie wings of a cloud : higher and yet higher
Divine form rose, till, attenuating into a
t, it was lost in the hazy distance. Was
his an airy dream—a strange delusion?
ould not be; their senses could not be
aken, their eyes could not have been
ived in the loved and well-known Person :

their ears could not have been deceived in the tones of the loving voice and its last tender benediction.

But how is their belief to be verified? It is not, in the case of the Ascension, as it was in the case of the Resurrection! They could visit personally and scrutinise the Tomb. They had it in their power orally to sift and compare the testimony of witnesses. But they have no longer access to the ascended and glorified body, to ascertain by touch its personal identity with that of their own beloved Master who was crucified. They cannot follow that chariot-cloud in its mysterious flight; they can send no messenger; they can delegate no Mary up to these untravelled heavenly heights with the question—They have taken away my Lord, tell me where they have laid Him! It was all important therefore, that, as in the case of the other momentous incidents in the Incarnation, some visible miraculous sign should be vouchsafed to the Church, to attest and certify the reality of the Saviour's session at the

her's right hand. Such a distinct proof He himself promised ere He departed, in the descent of the Holy Spirit.* With what intense longing eagerness, then, must His disciples have looked for this crowning evidence of their Lord's mission and divinity. It would be with them the testing, or rather the confirmatory, element in their creed. Let there be failure in the last promise, and they would be driven back again on their own faithless exclamation, "We TRUSTED it had been He who should have redeemed Israel."† As day after day elapsed, postponing would be the postponement! Often would the question pass from lip to lip, 'Is there no sign yet of His appearing? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?' No weary wanderer on a stormy sea, no lonely castaway through a night of tempest, would more wistfully long for the dawn, than these anxious twelve! But come it does at last. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, unto the soul that

* See Buchanan, p. 51.

† Luke xxiv. 21.

seeketh Him !” * On the day of Pentecost ;— assembled in loving communion (“ they are all with one accord in one place ”)—suddenly, a rustling is heard. It is the “ sound of a rushing wind ;” and forked lambent flames, like tongues of fire, crown the heads of the praying disciples. The Lord descended of old, first in the tempest, then in the fire, and then revealed Himself in “ the still small voice.” But on this occasion it is not the soft whisper, it is the voice of *power*—“ the Power of the Holy Ghost.” That rushing wind symbolised the bestowment of a new energy in proclaiming the glorious truths of the Gospel. Though numerically feeble, a mere handful of untutored and unlettered men, their Lord has given the word, and great is the company of those that publish it.† Hear with what remarkable boldness and confidence Peter (the inspired minister of that hour) speaks, regarding the wondrous attestation of the Saviour’s ascension, which

* Lam. iii. 25.

† Ps. lxxviii. 11.

d just been vouchsafed. How fully we feel
em to be the words of a man whose whole
il had now, by that miraculous confirmatory
n, been finally and for ever surrendered to
: service of his exalted Master:—"This
us hath God raised up, whereof all are wit-
ses: therefore being by the right hand of
d exalted, and *having received of the Father*
promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed
th this, which ye now see and hear. . . .
efore let all the house of Israel know
uredly, that God hath made that same
us whom ye have crucified both Lord and
rist."*

Yes! glorious proof and assurance that "that
me Jesus" who had vanished from their sight a
w days before, from one of the slopes of Olivet,
d really entered heaven and taken His seat
His kingly throne! By that baptism of
e, the Ascension is left no longer a matter of
th, or conjecture, or probability. It is pro-

* Acts ii. 32.

claimed a great fact in the development of the scheme of Redemption. The feeble infant Church on earth may unite with the ingathered ransomed of the heavenly Jerusalem :—" Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive."* "The Lord hath gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises."† The true Joseph's exaltation being completed, He can send the message of comfort—the corn-sacks of spiritual blessings to His brethren. Our Heavenly Ambassador having entered the celestial courts, and signed as Mediator of the Church the great treaty of peace, can send now back a glorious Divine delegate, loaded with gifts, which He can dispense "even to the rebellious"! Who, indeed, can read the wondrous story of these days, as it is simply recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, but must be conscious that a new era *had* dawned on the Church and on the

* Ps. lxxviii. 18.

† Ps. xlvii. 5.

It is remarkable, that in the days of our Saviour's personal ministry, the number of conversions was small. Even His Divine and wondrous works seemed to make comparatively little way in breaking down prejudice and Gentile unbelief. After years of preaching and miracle—what was the success? See the muster-roll of the converts immediately before Pentecost—"The number of the names together were about three hundred and twenty."* He seemed purposely to restrain His own power, in order to lay the foundation for the grace and work of the Holy Spirit in the new dispensation which this Divine agent was to inaugurate. No sooner, however, are the doors of heaven opened, no sooner does the promised Paraclete descend, than unexpected results follow. Hard hearts are softened, blinded eyes are opened, dry eyes are refreshed, and scoffing souls propound the question, "What must we do to be saved?" †

* Acts i. 15.† Acts xvi. 30.
X

The Lord is once more in His holy place, as in Mount Sinai—rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks. “Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby Thou didst confirm Thine inheritance when it was weary.” * Oh when the wondering disciples are witnesses of these moral miracles—thousands on thousands flying as doves to their windows, and nations, through their representatives then gathered at Jerusalem, “born in a day”—whatever may have been the sorrow with which they once heard of their divine Master’s severance from them; however deeply, since the hour they parted from Him on Olivet, they might have missed His personal companionship and love—they would cease at all events now to marvel at His saying or to dispute the expediency of His announced purpose,—“It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”

* Ps. lxxviii. 9.

Lord, come ! hide us in this new cleft of the **one** Glorious Rock :—and as the Beloved Disciple tells us he was “*in the Spirit*,” when his eyes **were** opened to the transcendent visions and **his** ears to the wondrous words of his ascended Lord, so may He open our ears to receive the soul-stirring message which gave heart-cheer to **the** lonely exile of Patmos, “Fear not ; I am He **that** liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive **for** evermore !”

“Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that **like** as we do believe Thy only begotten Son **the** Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens : so we may also in heart and mind **thither** ascend, and with Him continually dwell, **who** liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.”*

* Collect for Ascension-Day.

Christ the Intercessor.

- "He shall be a priest upon His throne."—*Zech.* vi. 13.
- "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."—*Heb.* viii. 1.
- "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."—*Heb.* ii. 17.
- "Seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."—*Heb.* vii. 25.
- "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."—*Heb.* ix. 12.
- "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."—*Heb.* x. 19-22.
- "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."—*Rev.* viii. 3, 4.
- "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"—1 *John* ii. 1.
- "WHO ALSO MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US."—*Rom.* viii. 34.

"Thanks, O Father, for Thy abounding love, which did not spare the only Son of Thy bosom, but did deliver Him up to the death for us, that we might have with Thee an Advocate so mighty and so faithful."—*Anselm*, A.D., 1093.

"He who might have been placing a vial of wrath in the hand of every angel around His throne, with a commission to pour it out on this rebellious world till it was utterly consumed, is standing at this moment, at the altar of incense, presenting our prayers for mercy, and officiating there as our Great High Priest."—*Harris*.

XIV.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"WHO ALSO MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US."—

Rom. viii. 13.

WITH the contemplation of every new Rock-cleft, the "treasures hid in Christ" seem to grow upon us, not only in number and variety, but in value and preciousness.

This is specially the case in meditating on the Redeemer as the INTERCESSOR of His Church and people. In that beautiful grouping of the great apostle's "Confidences" in his divine Lord, to which we have more than once adverted, the crowning one is that which heads this chapter;—"It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; *who also maketh intercession for us!*" It is when climbing, step by step, we reach this height of his high argument,

that he turns round with the challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" *

The intercession of the Saviour is based on His atonement. It has been well defined as "the efficacious virtue of the atonement perpetuated by a divine official act." Some theological writers have ingeniously drawn an analogy between creation and providence, atonement and intercession; † that just as Providence is the sustaining of the *creative* work—so that if Christ's continual upholding arm were withdrawn, the outer material world would soon lapse into disorganisation;—so, the intercession of Jesus is the carrying out, and carrying on, of His propitiatory and mediatorial work,—the complement of the great salvation consummated on Calvary. The Atonement, indeed, is in itself complete; just as this outer creation, (to revert to the analogy), was complete, when it came in all its glorious mechanism from the hands of God, and was pronounced "very

* Rom. viii. 34, 35.

† See Dr Symington on the Atonement *in loco*.

ood." But in order to perpetuate the benefits of Redemption, and make them available for his people, it is needful for Him, as the Highest, to continue His sacerdotal office "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens—a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man."* The temple-service of old was but a shadow of these sublime heavenly things. The Jewish High Priest, having offered on the great day of Atonement the sacrificial oblation on the altar of burnt-offering, attired himself in a dress of pure white linen,—linen robes, and linen girdle, and linen mitre, white from head to foot. Thus arrayed, he carried the blood in one hand, and the censer of live coals in the other, to the Most Holy place. Beating some fragrant incense small, he mixes it with the burning coals. A grateful cloud arises;—the whole temple Court is redolent with the perfume, and enveloped in smoke. Significant type, surely,

* Heb. viii. 2.

of Him who has entered through the rent veil of His own crucified body into the Holiest of all; carrying with Him the memorials of His own precious blood-shedding and the fragrant incense of His adorable merits. As the Jewish High Priest sprinkled the blood on the pavement before the mercy-seat, as well as on the mercy-seat; so, our Divine High Priest sprinkled His blood first on the floor of earth where He shed it, and now He sprinkles it on the throne of heaven. There, with the true incense and fire He pleads. Attired in the white linen vesture of His perfect obedience and righteousness, He confesses His people's sins—He stands between the congregation in the outer court of earth and the Divine shekinah. The mercy-seat is sprinkled; He waves the fragrant censer;—and the whole heavenly house is filled with the odour of the incense.

We dare not, indeed, presume to speculate or dogmatise on the *manner* of this intercession. It is a silent inarticulate speech and pleading. The voice of Abel's blood is represented, by a

old figure, as crying from the ground. That God, it need not be remarked, was in reality mute. So doubtless is it with our Divine Intercessor. There may be no articulate accents, no audible utterances. He sprinkles no material blood. But this we know, that He has carried with Him to His intercessory throne a glorified body, still bearing the visible marks of earthly humiliation and suffering—the perpetual memorials of His atoning sacrifice ;—so that that blood may still be said to have *a voice* before the throne—"The blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." * When on earth He poured out His soul "in strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, He was heard in that He feared." † In heaven, He pleads in silence ; His wounds are His argument ; He is heard in that He *feared !*

But in this, we are anticipating. We shall proceed, as the most befitting method of illus-

* Heb. xii. 24.

† Heb. v. 7.

trating the great truth, to enumerate one or two characteristics of the Saviour's intercession.

I. It is a *righteous Intercession*.—This is the attribute which specially suggests itself to the apostle John in his First Epistle, where, under a new figure, he thus speaks of his Lord's intercessory work: "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."* "*The Righteous*"—a word which refers not so much to the righteousness of the Saviour's *person*, as to the righteousness of His claim in behalf of His people. It is the Divine Advocate appealing to the equity of the Judge—resting His plea on the majesty of justice. An earthly counsel is only the hired and often venal pleader. The righteousness or unrighteousness of the cause he has espoused is no matter to him. His sole object is to gain his client's case; although even in the successful conducting of it before an earthly tribunal, he may have the tacit conviction of guilt and criminality, and that even—

* 1 John ii. 1.

handed justice is evaded or perverted. Varied, too, are his appeals to the pity of the jury or the mercy of the judge. Many a cause is determined, not on its merits, but by skilful and adroit pleadings, by dexterous sophistry, or by the sorcery of eloquence! Not so is it with the Great Intercessor. He pleads not, indeed, the personal innocence of His clients. On the ground of their own merits, they stand, in the sight of heaven, convicted and condemned,—destitute of all argument to support their cause. But they are made righteous through the righteousness of Him, their federal Head and Surety-Redeemer. The merits of His obedience and death constitute His plea on their behalf. It is because “He bare the sin of many,” that He makes “intercession for the transgressors.”* In thus, therefore, advocating the cause of His people, it is not the plea of the suppliant imploring mercy—the appeal of an obsequious petitioner. It is a plea of *right*. It is the triumphant Conqueror claiming His stipulated

* Isa. liii. 12.

reward. It is the Covenant-Surety claiming the fulfilment of the Father's promise. Addressing His Father in His last intercessory prayer, He appeals to Him in His character of *Righteous*. "*O holy Father,*" "*O righteous Father.*"* All the blessings of the atonement which are to us the free gifts of free grace, are to Him of *debt*. They are the purchase of His dying love. They come to Him, and through Him to us, as an old writer expresses it, "with the mark of the cross and the print of nails." This Righteous Advocate, standing before the throne, has only to utter His omnipotent *formula*, "Father, *I will!*"† And all that is within the compass of omnipotence to bestow is His: "Son, Thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is Thine!"‡

II. This leads naturally to a second characteristic resulting from the one just mentioned—viz., that it is a *prevalent Intercession*.—Jesus is

* John xvii. 11, 25.

† John xvii. 24.

‡ Luke xv. 31.

emphatically "the Prince" who has power with God and "*prevails*." All power has been committed to Him.* Him "the Father heareth always." † They are His own remarkable words in the 16th chapter of St John: "And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. At that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you." ‡ What means He by this? Is it not that the very mention of His all-prevailing *name* in the Father's ears, will be sufficient to ensure the suit of His people being heard and their claims regarded. "Ask in My *name*." As if He had said, 'It will dispense with the need of My formally pleading on your behalf. It will itself be a passport to the Father's regard. So intensely does He love Me for My work's sake and righteousness' sake, that you have only to give utterance to "the name that

* Matt. xxviii. 18.

† John xi. 42.

‡ John xvi. 23, 26.

is above every name," and its music will unlock to you the heart of God.'

How prevailing that name and that plea moreover must be, when we look to the host of petitioners who are warranted to use it. It is a beautiful part of the vision of the pleading covenant-angel in Revelation, with "the censer full of much incense" in his hand, that they are "the prayers of ALL saints," which, perfumed with His adorable merits, ascend before God's throne and are accepted! It is not merely the pleadings of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, men strong in faith giving glory to God. Neither is it the prayers enshrined and intoned in imposing ritual, rising from the great congregation amid fretted aisles, and borne on the wings of luscious music: but the groan, the glance, the tear, the tremulous aspiration of smitten penitents, the veriest lisp of infant tongues; the unlettered petitions morning and evening of the cottage home, where the earthen floor is knelt upon, where the only altar is the altar of the lowly heart, and the sacrifice that

of a broken and contrite spirit. It may be affirmed of the Father regarding one and all of these pleadings of the Divine Intercessor, in the prophetic words of the Psalmist, "Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips." *

Nor, having Him thus as our prevailing Intercessor, stand we in need of any other auxiliary, any other advocacy. On the great day of atonement in the Jewish Temple-service of old, no Levite, no subordinate Temple officer was permitted to assist the High Priest, either in the sacrificial offering, or in the subsequent carrying of the blood and incense. No voice within the veil was suffered to be heard, saving his. The congregation stood in the outer court. No other footstep dared venture within the holy precincts. There were crowds—thousands on thousands—close by. But this solitary of God is unaided, unaccompanied, at that solemn hour. Alone he pled; alone he sprinkled the blood; alone

* Ps. xxi. 2.

he waved the censer. So Christ hath entered *alone* into the holy place, having Himself obtained eternal redemption for us.* The alone Surety on earth, He is the alone Intercessor above. No other voice pleads with the Father; no other priest or minister, saint or angel, can be of any avail in coming between the sinner and God. As on earth He made the prophetic announcement, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone*, and of the people there are none with Me:" so, standing by the golden Altar above, and stretching down the golden sceptre, He, and He only, has the right and prerogative to ask, "What wilt thou, and what is thy request, it shall be even given to thee?"†

III. It is a *personal Intercession*.—It is not a mere general advocacy for His Church in its collective capacity—like Aaron rushing between the crowded masses of living and dead when the plague was stayed: but pleading

* Heb. ix. 12.

† Esther v. 3.

individual members of that Church with a discriminating personal interest, as if each separate case enlisted His sympathy and enlisted His regards. As the High Priest of old on his breastplate, gleaming with Urim and Thummim—not the one word *Israel*—but the separate distinctive names of all its tribes :—so is the Great Antitype. It is not His Church as an aggregate, but the name of each separate member He has imperishably engraven on His tablet. He, the Great Shepherd, seated on the heavenly hill and looking down on the earthly creatures, “ calleth His own sheep by *name*, and gathereth them out.” * He, the great Captain of Salvation, gazing down on His fighting warriors on the earthly battle-field, is represented as exclaiming, “ Him that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his *name* out of the book of life, but I will confess his *name* before My Father and His angels.” † He, the mighty Intercessor,

* John x. 3.† Rev. iii. 5.
Y

watching the assaults of the great Accuser of the brethren, is comforting every faint-heart with the old words addressed to a tempted disciple, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee that he might sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for THEE that thy faith fail not."* How does St John (in speaking of Jesus the Intercessor under the title of *Advocate*), introduce the Divine Pleader's name? Is it, "If His *Church*, if His people, if His members sin," they may rush in a crowd to the Intercessor on high, and cast their conjoint petitions at His feet or into His censer? No! there is a beautiful individuality—unit by unit in the mighty family of the ransomed have the comfort of it, "If *any man* sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."† Blessed truth! As in His own impressive parable of the Good Shepherd, He follows the ONE erring wanderer *until* He finds it;—the *one* stray sheep engrossing all His sympathies, as if He had no

* Luke xxii. 31.

† Dr Moore on the "Intercession of Christ."

thought, no room in His heart but for the ONE. So in His intercessory work. He has a loving regard for each separate child of His redeemed family ; He carries the case of each before God. The 144,000 harpers on the sea of glass—the representatives of the Church of the glorified—do not exclude His tender concern in those who are still suppliants in the outer courts. His Infinite wisdom, power, and love, are the Divine guarantees that none can be overlooked ; none left unsuccoured. An invisible golden chain links every tempest-tossed vessel to the eternal throne. Zechariah's description of Joshua, the High Priest, is a faithful portraiture of each saint of God to this hour. Satan at his right hand (" the public prosecutor ") resisting him ; pleading against him ; advocating his overthrow. But at his other side stands a Defender mightier than the mightiest ;—the Divine Angel-Intercessor, saying, " The Lord rebuke thee : Is not this (*this* ONE) a brand plucked out of the fire?" *

* Zech. iii. 2.

And that personal intercession will never cease, from the hour when the believer is first brought a lowly suppliant to the foot of the cross, until the final petition (unheard by weeping relatives in the death-chamber on earth) ascends from the lips of the Great Intercessor in heaven, "Father, I will, that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." *

IV. It is a *merciful and compassionate Intercession*.—On earth the successful mediator for the oppressed and suffering—the successful philanthropist—is, generally speaking, not the man of stern nerve and iron will ; but rather, the possessor of keen and tender sensibilities, who can himself enter into the tale of sorrow ; who, it may be, from dear-bought experience, can make the cause of the wretched his own. The most potent advocate of the captive, is he who has himself been familiar with the wrongs he de-

* John xvii. 24.

nounces. He who would most successfully plead, —indeed, who has most successfully pleaded the cause of the slave, is the man who is the liberated slave himself; who has had personal experience of the cruelty and indignity of the tyrant's scourge.

Jesus is a compassionate Intercessor—"a merciful"—as we have seen Him to be a "faithful High Priest;" for He can enter with liveliest sensibility into all the diversities of His people's experience. Their every pang and sorrow He has Himself endured. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted."* What a confidence this merciful character of the Great High Priest gives in approaching His intercessory throne, and soliciting His direction and guidance! Even on earth, what a joy and comfort it is in seasons of difficulty, to resort to a tried and loving friend, in whose tenderness and affection you can place unhesitating reliance! What an ease to unbosom in that brother's ear the

* Isa. lxiii. 9.

difficulty that is harassing you, and solicit his wise and faithful counsel! Jesus is this Blessed resort in all time of your tribulation. What a privilege, when Providence is dark and duty is perplexing, to repair straightway to this "Wonderful Counsellor;" to take your case, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, spreading it out before Him in prayer, and saying in simple faith, "I am oppressed, undertake for me."* An earthly advocate may ably conduct the cause confided to him, and vindicate or assert disputed rights. But it is not, we repeat, necessarily any more than the work of a hired pleader. He may never have seen his client's face, or claimed his acquaintance, far less his friendship. Not so the Heavenly Advocate. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."† "He is not ashamed to call us brethren."‡ "I have called you friends."§ In the Epistle of St James, God—"the God of Sabaoth"—is said to hear the cry of the

* Isa. xxxviii. 14.

‡ Heb. ii. 11.

† Heb. iv. 15.

§ John xv. 15.

defrauded reaper—the common labourer—when he utters the appeal of oppressed and down-trodden poverty.* How much more will the cries of His spiritual children enter with acceptance into the ears of their Intercessor! How tenderly will He compassionate, protect, defend, those whom He has redeemed with His own precious blood!

V. Finally. It is an *unchanging Intercession*.—Under the Levitical economy, the intercessor for the nation was removed by death. It was a temporary, hereditary, transmissible priesthood. Ever and anon the nation was clothed in sack-cloth, as they mourned their departed ecclesiastical head.

Not so Jesus! “This man because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.”† He is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.‡ Many a good and righteous cause on earth

* James v. 4.

† Heb. vii. 24.

‡ Heb. vii. 16.

has been lost by the death of its advocate. But our Advocate, as He is without beginning of days, is without end of years. As the tinkling bells of the High Priest's vestments were heard by the crowd in the outer court, while he himself was ministering within the veil,—the sound conveying to them the assurance that he was still engaged in the solemn act of intercession: so the ear of faith can still catch up the music of these sacred chimes—these silver bells in heaven;—"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!" The Jewish Hierarch acted as the nation's Intercessor for *one day* only—once every year—and for only a part of that one day. But, day without night is our Intercessor pleading. He never intermits; His love never cools; His ardour never decays! The true Moses on the Heavenly Rephidim, His hands never grow heavy; for of Him it is sublimely said, "He fainteth not, neither is weary."* Nor, we believe (and as we shall in a

* Isa. xl. 28.

sequent chapter more fully unfold), will He entirely abdicate His office as the Divine medium of communion and intercourse between God and His people. Even in the arch triumphant, "the Son," we read, is "consecrated *for evermore*." * "He *ever* liveth to make intercession for us."

Thus, then, have we endeavoured briefly to treat some of the characteristics of the Believer's Intercession ; as a Righteous Intercession ; a Prevalent Intercession ; a Merciful Intercession ; an Unchanging Intercession.

In conclusion, let us seek to receive this great truth, not as a figure of speech, but as glorious and sublime verity. Not a few are sometimes tempted to say, 'If Christ were still among us ; if He still trod our streets as once did those of Nazareth and Jerusalem ; if He ministered on our shores as once He did on the shores of Jordan and Gennesaret ; if penitence

* Heb. vii. 28.

could still creep, as it did of old, unbidden to His feet, to pour out in silent tears its tale of sorrow; if trembling conviction could steal (Nicodemus like) under the curtain of night to listen to the Heavenly Teacher's loving tones; if sorrow could rush, as once it did, with throbbing emotion, and cry out, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, our brother had not died;" if I could take my darling child, as once the Jewish mother did, and hurry through the crowd to receive the omnipotent touch and the healing word, all would be different. But alas! He is invisible. I am told to pray; but in vain I look for that countenance of compassion. In vain I listen at my threshold for that footfall of love! My sick chamber is like John's place of exile, a lonely Patmos: but, unlike him, I behold no one in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I see no symbol, I hear no voice! I pray, but it is to a Saviour-Intercessor I do not see!'

"THOMAS, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not

seen, and yet have believed." * "Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."† Yes! prayer can still carry you into that glorious and glorified *Presence*, and the hand of faith can still touch as on earth the hem of His garment! Jesus of Nazareth still passeth by. The spiritually blind and impotent can still breathe the prayer for mercy—for He ever "liveth!"

Think for a moment what it would be were that intercession suspended? Or, recurring once more to the analogy with which we started, think what this fair creation of ours would be, were the Divine Providential hand to be withdrawn! All would immediately collapse! Chaos and night would again rise to the ascendant, and the world rock to ruin. And what would be the result to the spiritual world—the Church—were the intercession of its Head intermitted? How would every Asahel be-

* John xx. 29.

† 1 Peter i. 8.

come a Ready-to-halt; every warrior's hand drop paralysed on the battle-field. It is sad to be deprived of the loving sympathy and counsel of the earthly friend we most valued;—when distance separates, or coldness estranges; or (saddest of all) when death puts his irrevocable seal on the sweet counsels of the past. What must it be were we deprived of the prayers and counsels and sympathies of *Jesus*! See that ye forfeit not these by sin. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will *not hear me*.” * Oh, saddest of all responses from the Heavenly Oracle is that of this Righteous Intercessor, when He looks down on His faithless people “hastening after another God,” and says, “Their drink-offerings of blood will I *not offer*, nor take up their names into My lips.” †

God grant that we may know, from personal experience, the blessedness of repairing to such a Rock-cleft as this: “He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle

* Ps. lxvi. 18.

† Ps. xvi. 4.

shall He hide me, He shall set me up upon a rock." * The Divine Intercessor, the Mighty leader before the throne issues the gracious invitation: "Come, My people, enter thou into my chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until mine indignation be overpast." † Let it be ours to respond with the ardent aspiration, the motive prayer: "Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: Thou hast given commandment to save me; for Thou art MY ROCK." ‡

* Ps. xxvii. 5.

† Isaiah xxvi. 20.

‡ Psalm lxxi. 3.

Christ the King.

- "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."—*Psalms* ii. 6.
- "My heart is inditing a good matter : I speak of the things which I have made touching the King."—*Psalms* xlv. 1.
- "Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."—*Psalms* xlv. 7.
- "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion : rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies."—*Psalms* cx. 1, 2.
- "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne ; and He shall be a priest upon His throne."—*Zeck.* vi. 13.
- "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—*Matt.* xxv. 34.
- "And He is the head of the body, the Church ; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."—*Col.* i. 18.
- "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name : That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth : And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* ii. 9-11.
- "HE HATH ON HIS VESTURE AND ON HIS THIGH A NAME WRITTEN, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."—*Rev.* xix. 16.

"Thou art the King of glory, O Christ ; Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." . . . "Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father."—*Te Deum*.

"As the Victim of God, He carries the wood for His sacrifice ; as a Conqueror, the arms with which He is to conquer the world ; as a King, the sceptre with which He is to rule His people."—*Origen*.

"Do you trust in a senseless stone?" said Hugo. "Trust in the Living Rock in Heaven—the Lord Jesus Christ. Anchor your hopes in Him, and He will direct you."—*Froude's Bishop of the 12th century*.

"We unite ourselves to the truth of Christ and His spouse. . . . He sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, and desires that every faithful soul should have recourse to Him alone."—*Confession of the Waldenses*, 1260.

XV.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

HE HATH ON HIS VESTURE AND ON HIS
THIGH A NAME WRITTEN, KING OF KINGS,
AND LORD OF LORDS."—Rev. xix. 16.

IN speaking of the Ascension of the Divine Redeemer in a preceding chapter, we have already so far anticipated consideration of the Rock-cleft which is now to engage our attention—the *Kingship* of Christ:—"Set as King on His holy hill of Zion"—made "Head over all things to His Church." But the theme is one which volumes cannot exhaust. Well might the inspired Psalmist thus speak of it. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak the things which I have made touching the King."* How sweet should be the music of

* Psalm xlv. 1.

these words to every believing heart—"He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. WHEREFORE God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *

When He disappeared from the sight of the eleven disciples on Mount Olivet, His extended hands poured a *priestly* benediction on these representatives of the Church of the future. But it is as a *King* He is next pictured to us in the page of inspiration. In the lofty poetry of the Psalmist, it is as a *King* He enters heaven. The summons of His attending retinue outside the celestial portals is—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory .

* Phil. ii. 9-11.

all come in." The response is made, "Who is this King of glory?" And the reply is returned, "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."*

His Regal office, indeed, did not date its commencement with His session at the right hand of God. In human language, that was only the date of His public investiture with royal honours;—when, in phrase borrowed from earthly coronations, He was said to be "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," †—after being made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." ‡ But His Kingship had a more ancient pedigree. He was designated King of His Church from the ages of eternity. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."§ Among other types, His royal dignity was foreshown in the person of Melchisedek, who was "King of Salem as well as Priest of the

* Ps. xxiv. 8-10.

† Heb. ii. 9.

† Ps. xlv. 7.

§ Prov. viii. 23.

Most High God.”* Also in the persons of King David and Solomon : the former, with more special reference to the years preceding His resurrection, when He was “the Man of sorrows”—reproach often breaking His heart—a King in the midst of enemies:—while Solomon, in the splendour of his reign, was typical of the risen and glorified Head of His people ; riding forth in the chariot of salvation, surrounded with the valiant of His spiritual Israel ; inaugurating, as the ascended monarch of the Church, the services of the Heavenly Temple. His regal power was predicted by the lips of patriarchs and prophets, from the Shiloh of Jacob to the Messiah-King of Zechariah. And when His advent in the flesh did take place ; though His only apparent palace was a stable at Bethlehem, and His throne a manger ; yet, even at His natal hour, representative potentates were present to do Him homage, bearing their kingly gifts of “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” Throughout the

* Heb. vii. 1.

period of His Incarnation—though wearing a garment of humiliation and a crown of thorns—He was clothed too with an invisible robe of glory and honour. Like some of our own ancient monarchs, He was King in disguise ; a sovereign in beggar's garb. Ever and anon the golden tassel of royalty revealed itself under the assumed ragged attire : while, on one memorable occasion, branches of royal palm strewed the highway across Mount Olivet—and the air rang with the acclamation—"Hosanna to the Son of David : Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"* In the very moment of His deepest abasement, in answer to the interrogation of a heathen judge, "Art Thou a King, then ?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest."†

It is important, moreover, to regard the Kingly office of Christ as the complement of His Priestly functions. Or, rather, it is the combination of the two which imparts to the believer surpassing comfort and confidence.

* Matt. xxi. 9.

† John xviii. 37.

As the great covenant angel, He has both the censer and the sceptre; while standing robed by the altar, He has "a crown of pure gold put upon His head."* All earthly rule is but the shadow of this great prototype of Sovereignty. The correct view, indeed, to take of Christ's Kingship, is not that of a mere figure or emblem derived from the rule of earthly monarchs; but rather are earthly crowns and sceptres derivations and emanations from this great central everlasting throne. They have their archetype or primal pattern in the kingdom of heaven—in the Person and dignity of Him who is "for ever set down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens."†

* Ps. xxi. 3.

† This view is well stated by a distinguished writer:—"It is not an happy accident which has yielded so wondrous an analogy . . . to set forth the mystery of Christ's relation to His elect Church. There is far more in it than this. The earthly relation is, indeed, but a lower form of the heavenly, on which it rests and of which it is the utterance. The Lord is King—not borrowing this title from the kings of the earth—but having lent His own title to them—and not the name only, but having so ordered, that all true rule and government upon earth, with its righteous laws, its stable ordinances, its punishments and its

The earthly Sovereignty with which we are familiar, may serve to suggest a few simple thoughts regarding the mediatorial Kingship of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our exalted King, has *a Throne*. It is a throne of Righteousness. Righteousness is at the foundation of all rule. History and experience are ever reading and re-reading, that the earthly throne *not* established in righteousness—based on tyranny and wrong,—bolstered up by oppression and perfidy—will, sooner or later, totter to its fall. The Intercessory and Kingly offices of Christ, are alike founded on the great work of righteousness wrought out and completed by Him on earth. "Righteousness is the girdle of His loins."* "This is the name whereby He is called, The Lord our

grace, its majesty and its terror, should tell of Him and of His kingdom, which ruleth over all. So that 'Kingdom of God' is not in fact a figurative expression, but most literal. It is rather the earthly kingdoms and the earthly kings that are figures and shadows of the true." See Preface to "Archbishop Trench on the Parables," page 14.

* Isa. ii. 5.

Righteousness.”* It forms the theme of adoration alike of His Church below and of the Church of the first-born in Heaven, as they “speak of the might of His terrible acts and the glorious majesty of His *Kingdom*.”† “Thou lovest *righteousness* and hatest wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made Thee glad.”‡

The Lord Jesus, our exalted King, has a *Sceptre*. It is called “the rod of His power:”§ “The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion.”|| By it He is said to rule in the midst of His enemies.¶ As His throne is a throne of righteousness, so this “sceptre of His kingdom is a right (or righteous) sceptre.”** In the proclamation of the Gospel, His design is to vindicate the righteousness of His law in the

* Jer. xliii. 6.

§ Ps. cx. 2.

† Ps. cxlv. 6.

|| Ps. cx. 2.

** Ps. xlv. 6.

‡ Ps. xlv. 7, 8.

¶ Ps. cx. 3.

salvation of sinners, and to foster and advance the cause of righteousness among His people. That Gospel is "the little Book" which the angel in the apocalyptic vision held in his hand, when he was seen flying with it open in the midst of heaven.* In the eye of the world's wisdom, a "little Book," a little Sceptre, a feeble rod. But "the wisdom of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." "Is not My word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? † "The Spirit of the Lord," was the opening sentence of the Messiah's ministry, "is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the meek." ‡ And when that ministry was terminating, and He was about to delegate the rod of His power to others, this was still the parting apostolic commission, "Go ye into all the world and *preach* the gospel to every creature."

Nobly did His followers fulfil His royal de-

* Rev. xiv. 6.

† Jer. xxiii. 29.

‡ Isa. lxi. 1.

cree. Hear the boldest and bravest of these ambassadors—the great apostle of the Gentiles. Whether he stood amid the soldiers and senators of imperial Rome, or among the merchant princes of Corinth, or the sailors of the Adriatic, or the cultured philosophers on the Athenian Areopagus—hear him proclaiming, as he holds out the same golden sceptre delegated to him by his heavenly King—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." *

This suggests, that Jesus Christ our Divine King has, like earthly sovereigns, *subordinate Officers to carry on the administration of His vast empire*. We cannot withdraw the veil which screens the upper sanctuary. Could we do so, doubtless we should find "the spirits of the just made perfect" engaged in ceaseless embassies and ministries of love in behalf of their exalted

* Rom i. 16.

and glorified Head;—employed in bringing to Him royal revenues of glory from distant worlds. In one of the beautiful figurations of the Apocalypse, the armies of heaven (angelic natures as well as the redeemed) are represented as “following Him upon white horses.”

But we know with certainty that He has appointed such officers in His Church and kingdom on earth, to gather in “ransomed spoil” against the day of His final appearing and enthronement as Lord of all. He has selected, moreover, these subordinate ministers of His court, not from among angels, not from among the unsinning inhabitants of heaven; but from those whom He has purchased with His own blood;—dust and ashes—earthen vessels—with no badge of distinction or human greatness: often purposely the weakest instrumentality, that the excellency and the power may appear to be of Him alone. “As My Father sent Me,” said He, as He invested His disciples with divine authority, “even so send I you.”* These specially gifted and endowed

* John xx. 21.

office-bearers of the Gospel age, clothed with miraculous powers needful for laying and consolidating the Church's foundations, are indeed now withdrawn. But while the extraordinary ministrations have ceased, the ordinary remain. The "prophets and apostles" have been followed by "pastors and teachers": and though claiming no 'apostolic succession' in the conventional sense of the word—no gift of tongues or of prophesying ;—yet we assert and maintain the Divine institution of the pastoral office. The King has still heralds, as of old, to prepare His way before Him ; and these in their turn are charged by Him to commit their work to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Ministerial power is derived, not from priestly ordination or hereditary virtue, but directly from the King Himself. "To every one of us is given grace *according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*" * "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our

* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

sufficiency is of God." * As the earthly King has his viceroy and ambassador at foreign courts, empowered to speak in his sovereign's name, and to vindicate his sovereign's rights, so He hath committed unto His servants "the ministry of reconciliation," and empowered them thus to deliver their high behest: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." †

As an earthly King has *Subjects*, so has our heavenly King. His mediatorial sway is indeed, in one sense, universal: "His kingdom ruleth over all;" "All things were created," not only by Him, but "for Him." ‡ His true subjects, however, are composed of the Church, which He hath redeemed with His blood: chosen by Him "before the foundation of the world." § "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an

* See Stevenson on the "Offices of Christ," p. 341.

† 2 Cor. v. 20.

‡ Col. i. 16, 17.

§ Ephes. i. 4.

horn" (*horn*, the type of kingly rule) "of salvation for us in the house of His servant David."* These, His people, are said to become "willing in the day of His power." What day is that? Doubtless it is the momentous era in their lives, when, by the efficacious grace of His Spirit, they are brought to surrender their weapons of rebellion ; to renounce the service of Satan, and enrol themselves under the banner of their Saviour-King. To effect this result, at times the terrors of the law are employed : those arrows which "are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under Him."† At other times, "the still small voice" proves, as in the case of the prophet, more efficacious than tempest, and earthquake, and fire. The heart is conquered and won by love.

A two-fold change is at that great crisis-hour undergone.

There is, first, a change of *state*. The new-born subjects of the King are enrolled among the

* Luke i. 69.

† Ps. xlv. 5.

pardoned. Enemies once, with the sentence of death recorded against them—they receive a full forgiveness:—a royal amnesty is extended to them—they are “accepted in the Beloved.”* From being by nature and practice (to use the simile in the Song of Solomon), like “pillars of smoke,” they become redolent “with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant.”† Captives once—the chains are struck off; prodigals once—the home of their Father is thrown open. God in His judicial character justifies them—in His paternal character He adopts them. They are received into the number and invested with all the privileges of Sonship.

But, in addition to the change of state, that “day of power” brings along with it a change of *character*. It not only captures the citadel of the heart, which had long held out against the heavenly King, but all its magazines and resources are now willingly laid in tribute at His feet. The understanding is enlightened, the

* Ephes. i. 6.

† Song of Sol. iii. 6.

affections purified, the will renewed. The body, which was formerly the slave of unrighteousness unto sin, is now consecrated to His service. Inspired with love and loyalty, His people reverence His laws. It is their supreme delight to serve and honour Him. Their interests are identified with His. Their obedience is not the coerced duty of the slave, but the delight of a voluntary heart-surrender. The moral and spiritual transformation is likened to the working of that mighty power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.* More than this:—just as in the case of friends with whom we are in the habit of daily and familiar intercourse, we insensibly catch up their tone and manner and conversation, and imbibe their tastes and likings:—so it is with believers and Him, who, though a King, delights to call them “friends.” They gradually become assimilated to the Divine character. They imbibe His spirit; they reflect His image. “The King’s daughter,” like her Lord, becomes

* Ephes. i. 19.

"all glorious within ; her clothing is of wrought gold"* (the inwrought graces of the Spirit). So that it may be said of Christ's true people as of the brethren of Gideon, "each one resembled the children of a king."†

Thus then the subjects of this Divine Mediator receive the double boon of having their natures changed as well as their sins pardoned ; or as this is briefly but beautifully stated by St Peter in his address before the Jewish council, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give *repentance* to Israel and *forgiveness* of sins."‡

Does the personal question here occur, 'How are we to become the subjects of this exalted Sovereign ? What is the passport of admission into His royal favour and within His palace-gates ? Have we to fight our way to it, like desperate men, through blood and death ? Have we in our own strength to scale inaccessible ramparts before reaching the city of the

* Ps. xlv. 13.

† Judges viii. 18.

‡ Acts v. 31.

great King?’ Listen to the words of the beloved disciple, “As many as received Him to them gave He power (or the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on His name.”* We have no merit in the attainment of these royal privileges and prerogatives. They are all derived from grace and bestowed through faith. The hand which “delivers from the power of darkness” translates also into “the kingdom of His dear Son.”† The charter of our rights is delivered to us in the same way as the *cure* was dispensed to the cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple:—“*In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk.*”‡ Or, to employ an older Bible simile, He, the true Ahasuerus, extends the regal sceptre, and of His sovereign good pleasure confers the rich blessings of His spiritual kingdom.

While, however, it is by grace we are redeemed, we must never forget that *holiness* is the distinguishing badge of all true subjects of the

* John i. 12.

† Col. i. 13.

‡ Acts iii. 6.

Saviour's rule. This is the characteristic of "the nations of them which are saved"—a *holy people*. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." † "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it through the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, without having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it should be holy and without blemish." ‡ If we are partakers of this heavenly citizenship, denizens of this glorious spiritual empire, let us listen to the word of power, divinely recorded as the test of our loyalty and allegiance, "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." §

One other observation is suggested by the analogy between an earthly and heavenly sovereign. As a truly great earthly king has ever in view *the good of his subjects*, so it is with our gra-

* Rev. xxi. 24.

† Ephes. v. 26, 27.

‡ Matt. v. 8.

§ 1 Pet. i. 15.

cious Redeemer. In His beneficent administration, He has constantly and invariably at heart the welfare of each individual member of His spiritual realm. The children of Zion may well be "joyful in their King." They may trust His combined power, and wisdom, and faithfulness; for all things, by immutable covenant, are working together for their good. He is depicted in one of Zechariah's visions, as a royal warrior, riding in the midst of His Church on a "red horse," while "red horses, speckled and white," are in the same vision represented as forming His retinue:—varied coloured providences—some "white" (clearly understood), others "red and speckled" (or mottled).* But all providences are under His control. Even when He afflicts, He afflicts not willingly. Chastisement is one of His love-tokens. This royal Shepherd often seeks out His flock in "the dark and cloudy day." He will not suffer trial to go too far. He will not allow His people to be tempted above what

* Zech. vi. 3.

they are able to bear. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."* We may well, in all that concerns us and ours, trust Him in the dark; remembering that He is infinite in His wisdom and boundless in His resources. Let "the shout of a King" be in the midst of His spiritual Israel. He has but one object in view in all His dealings with them—the "bringing many sons unto glory."† And He will not leave His work undone till their salvation is complete. They may well take up the words of the prophet, and say with triumphant assurance, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our *King*; He will save us."‡

We have thus briefly contemplated some of the characteristics of the rule of Christ over His Church and people. But there is one special phase of His sovereignty constantly unfolded in Scripture, to which we may make a brief reference in closing. It is the exercise of that Sove-

* 2 Pet. ii. 9.

† Heb. ii. 10.

‡ Isa. xxxiii. 32.

reignty over His enemies. While we are told of "the rod of His strength out of Zion" by which He rules His people, we are told of a rod of iron by which He "breaks" His foes; "dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel."* As the warrior of Edom, He is represented, with blood-stained raiment, coming up from the overthrow of His adversaries:—first of all, indeed, "speaking in righteousness—mighty to save;" but to those who reject that righteousness, mighty to destroy and to condemn.† "The Lord," we read in Ps. cx., "said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine *enemies* Thy footstool." "And I saw," says John, "heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns."‡ The power of His enemies is only temporary—the triumph of His own cause is certain. "The rod of the wicked" will not always

* Ps. ii. 10.

† Isa. lxiii. 1.

‡ Rev. xix. 12.

"rest upon the lot of the righteous."* Despotism, Tyranny, Atheism, Popery, Infidelity, and the other foes of His Church and forces of evil, may do their worst. But every anti-Christian confederacy will at last be broken like a gossamer thread. "He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet."† It is a comforting and elevating contemplation, and especially in these days, to think of Christ as King of nations, as well as King of His Church ;—King of providence as well as King of grace ;—and making all events work out His own ends for the advancement of the cause of righteousness. He who manifested Himself in olden time, by His visible interpositions, as God of nature ;—who made the outer materialism, alike earth and firmament, subservient to His purposes ;—putting a drag on the burning axles of the sun,—causing the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera,—drying up the tongue of the Red Sea,—making the hail of heaven—drifting sleet—the white arrows of His

* Ps. cxxv. 3.

† 1 Cor. xv. 25.

quiver—to accomplish the conquest of Israel's foes :—(“ When the Almighty scattered kings, it was white as snow in Salmon :”*)—this sovereign Mediator superintends and controls the revolution of the still more complex and often apparently capricious wheels of Providence. He “holdeth the stars (the emblems of political rulers) in His right hand,” as well as “walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”† See how in the bold figure used by the Prophet, He put a bit in the mouth of haughty Sennacherib! That heathen king was the instrument, employed by a Mightier, for the needed chastisement of apostate Judah: “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.”‡ Never, doubtless, did that tyrant dream, that his whirlwind march through the passes of the Lebanon, so graphically described by the inspired narrator, was at the dictate and to fulfil the sovereign purposes of the great God of armies. He would have spurned the thought of being

* Ps. lxxviii. 14.

† Rev. ii. 1.

‡ Isa. x. 7.

the rod of Jehovah's anger and the "staff of His indignation." As such, nevertheless, he was employed—the minister of divine retribution ; and then, when he had done his work, his legions were scattered like chaff before the whirlwind ! "I am Jehovah of hosts," says the Divine Messiah, "and besides Me there is no God."* And all the plottings and counterplottings of tyrants and despots, civil and ecclesiastical, will be similarly overruled for the spread of His cause, and the discomfiture and final overthrow of His enemies ;—when they shall be "consumed with the breath of His mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming."†

'Prince of peace, take to Thyself Thy great power, and reign!' "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and with Thy majesty, and in Thy majesty, ride prosperously!"‡ We know the day is coming when Thou shalt be "King over all the earth, and Thy name one"§—when Thou

* Isa. xlv. 8.

† 2 Thess. ii. 8.

‡ Ps. xlv. 3, 4.

§ Zech. xiv. 9.

shalt become, as prophecy has described Thee, "the Desire of all nations"*—when to Thee as the true Shiloh, shall "the gathering of the people be."† "Violence shall no more be heard in Thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders."‡ The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of Thy millennial glory.§ The shout of jubilant loyalty recorded in the Canticles will have its true fulfilment in that great coronation-day:—"Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."|| What a mighty multitude will bow down before that chariot of victory, in which are yoked the white horses of salvation;—a multitude with palms in their hands, out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people:—the Bride of the King—seated alongside her Lord, wearing on her person the costly jewels (her royal

* Haggai ii. 7.

† Gen. xlix. 10.

‡ Isa. lx. 11

§ Rev. xxi. 24.

|| Cant. iii. 11.

dowry) of "glory, honour, immortality, eternal life!"*

Let us, in conclusion, hear this Warrior-king, standing, as He did of old before Joshua with a sword drawn in His hand, and asking each of *us* individually, "Art thou *with* Me or *against* Me?"† Reader! have you ever pondered all that is comprehended in the reality—"AGAINST Him?" Let Balaam's description be true of you now;—one whose "dwelling is in the clefts of the Rock;" so that the same soothsayer's other awful words may never be verified in your experience—"I shall see *Him* (I shall see these clefts), but not near; I shall behold Him, but not nigh."‡ "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."§

* Rom. ii. 7.

† Num. xxiv. 17.

† Josh. v. 13.

§ Ps. ii. 12.

Christ the Judge.

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. . . And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man."—*John v. 22, 27.*

"It is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."—*Acts x. 42.*

"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."—*2 Cor. v. 10.*

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."—*2 Thess. i. 7, 8.*

"Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."—*Heb. ix. 28.*

"Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."—*Rev. i. 7.*

"BECAUSE HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY, IN THE WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD."—*Acts xvii. 31.*

"We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge."—*Te Deum.*

"Because of His alliance with man's nature; because of His sense of man's infirmities; because of all He did and suffered for man's sake as the Son of man, the Son is that Person of the Trinity who is the most fit as well as most worthy to be man's Judge."—*Burton.*

"He will take His seat upon a throne infinitely exceeding that of earthly or even of celestial princes, clothed with His Father's glory and His own, surrounded with a numberless host of shining attendants. . . . In the meantime, O my Divine Master, may my loins be girded about, and my lamp burning, and mine ears be watchful for the blessed signal of Thine arrival"—*Doddridge, 1702.*

XVI.

"This is the confidence we have in Him"—

"BECAUSE HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY, IN THE WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD."—Acts xvii. 31.

IT is the well-known climax of the sublimest of Litanies, "*In the Day of Judgment*, good Lord deliver us!" Happy are they who have obeyed the summons of the great Prophet:—"Enter into the Rock and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth;"* and who can thus appropriate the strong

* Isa. ii. 10, 19.

confidence embodied in the dying testimony of the chiefest of apostles—"I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."* "Where art thou?" was the thrilling question which rang amid the blighted bowers of Eden, when "the voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day." In a far different sense will that question yet come to be uttered. Alas! in the case of thousands on thousands, the only reply will take the shape of an invocation to rock and mountain to become abettors in the futile attempt to evade Omniscience. But on the other hand, the response of earth's first apostate will have a new and glorious meaning in the lips of each member of the ingathered Church, who, washed in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, has fled to Him for safety:—"I heard Thy voice and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself!"† Hid myself in Christ ; hid myself in the

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

† Gen. iii. 9, 10.

Rock of Ages ! Even now may we be enabled, with some good measure of triumphant assurance, to take up the oft-repeated words, and sing them in anticipation of that Great Day with its glorious shelter and hiding-place—

“ When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne ;—
Rock of Ages ! cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee ! ”

It will be observed that the verse selected to head this chapter, and which we may take to guide our thoughts in considering the lofty theme, connects the present Rock-cleft with one already dwelt upon. There is a connection stated between the Resurrection of Christ, and His appearance as Judge of all mankind. After announcing that the world is to be judged in righteousness by the Man of God's ordaining, St Paul in his address to his Athenian auditory, is represented as adding, “ Whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” Jesus, in the course of His public ministry, had announced two great

truths to His hearers, both wearing the stamp of strangeness and improbability. The one, that He Himself was to die, and by His own inherent power to rise again ; that after being laid in the grave, He was to come forth on the third day alive from the sepulchre. And in order to fix this astounding fact in their memories, He associated it with the remarkable analogy or prefiguration in the history of one of their own prophets—"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* Or yet again, investing their honoured Temple with a typical significancy, "Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up."† This was the one well-nigh incredible fact. The other was still more marvellous—viz., that at some indefinite period of the future, in the exercise of the same power by which He was to quicken His own body, all the millions that ever trod this world were to be awakened from the

* Matt. xii. 40.

† John ii. 19.

sleep of death, and cited at His righteous bar. Everlasting awards were to be apportioned. They that had done good were to come forth to "the resurrection of life," and they that had done evil to "the resurrection of damnation."*

Now the first of these two marvels had been accomplished. The *Resurrection* of the Redeemer we found to be an historical fact, certified and accredited by "many infallible proofs." And by the fulfilment of the one prodigy, God has set His seal to the indubitable certainty of the other. As surely as the crucified and buried Jesus of Nazareth came forth triumphant from His tomb on the appointed third day, so surely will the slumbering myriads of mankind—the dust of ages and centuries—awake at His summons to judgment. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."†

We may make one other preliminary remark suggested by these words of the apostle. They vividly impress upon us the *certainty* of that

* John v. 29.

† See Blunt's "Posthumous Sermons," vol. i.

day and that tremendous scene. Other events and transactions in the world are uncertain; their occurrence is contingent on circumstances. In that unwritten roll of our varied futures, there is no one event of which we can feel infallibly sure, save our death. But this Day of judgment is as great an historical verity of the future, as the Resurrection of Christ is of the past. Even the period is not left unfixed and indeterminate. Utterly beyond the presumptuous guesses of human soothsayers, (for "of that day and that hour knoweth no man,") yet it is known to God. "He hath *appointed* a day." The day is written in the Book of His decrees; and every hour is bringing you and me nearer its solemnities. "Surely," says the now reigning King, as He makes the last inspired communication to His Church, "*Surely I come quickly.*"*

What will be the transactions of that day?

Let us note, first, the believer's confidence

* Rev. xxii. 20.

and security as he contemplates *the Person* of the enthroned Judge. God is to judge the world in righteousness "by *that* MAN whom He hath ordained." It is "*the Son of Man*" who is then to come in His glory. He is to come, indeed, in unutterable majesty as the Supreme Jehovah—the co-equal and co-eternal of the Father. But He is to come also in His *own glory*, as the Mediator of His Church;—the effulgence of His Godhead is to be tempered with the tenderness of His humanity. As my Kinsman, my Avenger, the Brother in my nature, the Lord who died for me, who is now pleading for me, He is to stand on that latter day on the earth; to vindicate my cause, to wipe off every aspersion on my character, to ratify my pardon and acceptance before an assembled world, and joyfully to proclaim, in the presence of His Father, as He points to the trophies of redeeming grace and love around Him, "Behold I and the children which Thou hast given Me!"*

* Isa. viii. 18.

Observe next, the *sphere* or *extent* of His *Judicial procedure*. On that appointed day He is to "judge the *world*." All that have ever lived are to be gathered within the area of that supreme tribunal; "Before Him shall be gathered all nations."* "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God."† Not one shall be missing! From earth's teeming mounds: from ocean's hidden caverns. The pauper from his shroud of dust;—the king from his gilded cenotaph. Consecrated and unconsecrated ground alike will yield what they have long held in custody. "*Every eye* shall see Him;" every knee shall bow before Him; either in the reverence of adoring love and joy, or in the unutterable anguish of despair. How solemnly does the Apostle bring home to each of us, alike the universality and personality of that vast assize:—"So then every one of *us* shall give account of himself to God."‡

* Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

† John v. 28.

‡ Rom. xiv. 12.

Next, let us note the one attribute which will then be conspicuously displayed. He is to "judge the world in *Righteousness*." It is to be a throne of uncompromising equity. It is said of the Divine Conqueror of the Apocalypse, who, on His white horse, now heads the armies of heaven, that in "*Righteousness* He doth judge and make war."* We never can speak too much or too often of the reign or of the Throne of Grace. We never can proclaim too urgently the glad welcome which awaits every stricken penitent. We delight to picture that Throne with its rainbow canopy, and the inscription which surmounts it, "Faithful and just to forgive sins." But the day will come, when the rainbow-tints shall melt and merge into the colour of alabaster (the type of pure untainted justice),—"I saw," says St John, "a great *white* throne."† *Righteousness*, we have again and again seen, has been the foundation on which the whole work of the Atonement was reared, and *Righteousness* will

* Rev. xix. 11.

† Rev. xx. 11.

turn its closing act, the top-stone of the completed Temple.

Nor are we left in ignorance as to the *principle* which will regulate that righteous adjudication. "He will judge every man *according as his work shall be.*"* "And the dead were judged every man *according to their works.*"† The silence of the hushed assembly will be broken by this avowment, coming from lips from which there is no appeal—"He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."‡ Let it not be supposed that these sentences and awards in any degree trench on the grand central Gospel truth of salvation by grace—salvation without the deeds or works of the law. Every glorified and happy saint that day will be justified by faith, and by faith

* Job. xxi. 12.

† Rev. xx. 13.

‡ Rev. xiii. 11.

alone. If he be accepted, it is "accepted in the Beloved;" if righteous, it is because he stands clothed in the surety-righteousness of his Redeemer; if saved and sheltered, it is because he is sheltered in the "Clefts of the Rock." But good works, as the result and fruit of faith, will, in the case of all Christ's people, be required, not as the grounds of acquittal, but as the evidences of the reality of their union with Him. In the case of the impenitent, *their* recompense will be in accordance with life antecedents; so that their future condition will only be the continuance and perpetuation of present character. In their case, evil deeds will form the ground of condemnation, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." * Our Lord's say-

* Rev. xxi. 8.

ing will have, in the case of all such, an awful but truthful fulfilment, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there shall the eagles" (of retribution, the vultures of their own sins) "be gathered together."* The master lusts, tyrant passions of the present, will form their future tormentors.

Let none forget or overlook the moral aspect of that august assize, as the Great sifting-day of character—the Day when the Books of Conscience, and Memory, and Privilege, are to be opened; when life—*all* life—every page, and chapter, and line in the biography—will be resuscitated and vivified; when hypocrisy, with its subterfuges, will be exposed; the thousand masks and vizors torn from the faces they have successfully screened, as they confront *Him* "whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace."† In the present economy, discrimination is impossible. The righteous and

* Matt. xxiv. 28.

† Rev. i. 15.

the wicked are found together promiscuously. The good and the bad fishes are in one net. The tares and the wheat are in the same field. The sheep and goats browse on the same pasture. Vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour, are found in the same family, the same community, the same church. But not so in *that* Day. He, who judges "in righteousness," will separate the one from the other. When the angels with sickle in hand, of whom we have spoken, receive the mandate, "Thrust ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe," the myriads mown down by these celestial Reapers are to be bound in distinct and separate *bundles*; some for the heavenly garner; others to be "cast out." The great gulf of separation is fixed for ever. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." *

Reader, are you prepared for this hour of solemn transaction? Are you able to look forward to it with joyful hope and expectancy as the day of your complete and final glorification; when the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will confess your name "before His Father and before His holy angels," and welcome you "to inherit the kingdom?"* It is "the day of the manifestation of the sons of God."† It will then be found that God's people were in this world often hidden—unknown; often their goodness and graces and virtues unacknowledged, misrepresented, or scorned; their failures or inconsistencies unduly magnified and exaggerated; their light hidden under a bushel, or prematurely quenched by persecution and death. But "*then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!"‡ That second coming was to the early Christians their cherished harbour of refuge in the midst of envying storms: "And to wait for His Son from

* Matt. x. 32.

† Rom. viii. 19.

‡ Matt. xiii. 43.

heaven ;”* “ The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ ;”† “ Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”‡ Moreover, it is well worth noting, that in the inspired epistles, it is not the day of *death* which is spoken of or looked forward to by the Church with jubilant expectation, but *the day of Christ’s appearing*. It is that day which gives the sacred writers their strongest motives and incentives, not only for the urging of watchfulness, but for the cherishing of hope, faith, and joy. Need we wonder at this? Death is no pleasing theme: though the Christian’s last enemy, it is an enemy still—‘the King of Terrors;’ but the “*Parousia*”—the Advent of the divine Saviour—is identified with final triumph over death; when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; and the saying shall be brought to pass as it is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”§ Not only so, but

* 1 Thess. i. 10.

‡ James v. 8.

† 2 Thess. iii. 5.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 54.

that "vile body" (itself a part of the redemption-purchase) will come forth from the dishonours of the grave, fashioned like to the glorious body of its glorified Redeemer.

In the experience also of God's people this "blessed hope" has calmed, and cheered, and elevated many a pilgrim in his passage through the dark valley. It is said of a distinguished ornament of the English bench* that, on sending for Archbishop Usher as he felt death approaching, he declared to that prelate, that amid all the collected stores of human learning and erudition he had in his rare library, there was but one sentence on which he could rest with comfort, and that sentence was from holy Scripture: "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed

* Judge Selden.

hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* How many anguished, bereaved mourners, too, have had their grief calmed and their tears dried, by this same sublime antidote of the great Apostle, as he points them on to the second coming of their Lord, and associates that coming with the restoration of their beloved dead! “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, *will God bring with Him.*”† At that blessed season when “the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God;”—amid these revived friendships and indissoluble reunions, “God”—the God on the throne—the Brother-man—“shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”‡

* Tit. ii. 13.

† 1 Thess. i. 14.

‡ Rev. vii. 17.

Nor is the anticipated joy of that Day altogether a personal and selfish one. No small element of it is the believer's joy at the glory which will then encircle the brow of his adorable Lord. It will be the public enthronement of Jesus of Nazareth. He will come "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired of them that believe."* All the humiliations of His first coming,—the manger—the carpenter's home—the unsheltered head—the nights of wakeful anguish—the scorn, and taunt, and jeer—the piercing thorns—the bitter cross—the ignominious sepulchre—all, all now exchanged for the shout of welcome: "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him."† How often, among His own people on earth, is He dishonoured;—wounded in the house of His friends;—the unsullied glory of the Master tarnished with the blemishes and inconsistencies of the disciples. But not so on that Day. Even these marred, blotted, imperfect images and reflections,

* 2 Thess. i. 10.

† Isa. xxv. 9.

shall then, at least, become perfect copies and transcripts of their glorious divine Original: "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* "I saw," says St John, "the Holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, *prepared* as a bride adorned for her husband." †

Let us only remark, in closing, that the best preparation for His second coming to judge, is to rest, with firm believing trust and confidence, in His first coming to save. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." ‡ Seek to be now forming the character you would wish to have completed and perfected, when the Advent shall take place:—"Let every man that hath this hope in him purify himself even as He is pure."§ Whatever your earthly duties be, do them nobly, purely, faithfully,—keeping, amid the rough tear

* 1 John iii. 2.

‡ Heb. ix. 28.

† Rev. xxi. 2.

§ 1 John i. 3.

and wear of a work-day world, a conscience void of offence. Not like some of the enthusiasts of the Pauline age, who, in the erroneous anticipation and interpretation of that Advent, deserted their posts of duty, and surrendered themselves to an existence of dreamy contemplation : but rather, in the midst of your laborious callings, glorify in these the Lord who redeemed you,—prosecuting your prescribed path, whatever it be Only remembering thus to pursue, with the loins girded and the lamps burning, and being like those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord.* With such a glory in reversion, what are earth's pomps and vanities? How do its riches, and honours, and ambitions pale into utter nothingness before the approaching blaze of that advent throne! “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.”† Blessed is he, who, in whatsoever calling he be called, therein abides with God. Thus remaining expectant in this glorious Rock-

* Luke xii. 35, 36.

† Rev. xvi. 5.

cleft, we can mark the rainbow-arch which spans the sky of the future, connecting the cross with the crown; and say, in lowly believing confidence, with one of the Church's noblest watchers, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at *that day!*"*

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Christ reigning over His Church for ever.

"Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."—*Daniel* vii. 27.

"Because I live, ye shall live also."—*John* xiv. 19.

"Shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."—*Rom.* v. 17.

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."—*Rev.* v. 13.

"HE SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER."—*Rev.* xi. 15.

"And now, O Saviour, what a superabundant amends is made to Thy glorified humanity, for all Thy bitter sufferings upon earth. . . . How do I, by the eye of my soul, see Thee both attended up in that heavenly progress, and welcomed unto the highest heavens, by all the host of those celestial spirits; no small part of whose perpetual happiness it is to see Thee in Thy exaltation; sitting at the right hand of Majesty: there they enjoy Thee; there they sing continual hallelujahs to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."—*Bishop Hall*, 1652.

"Lest we should imagine that Christ should ever cease to be King, or so interpret this Article, as if He were after the day of judgment to be removed from the right hand of God, the ancient Fathers added those words to the Nicene Creed, '*whose kingdom shall have no end*,' against the heresy which then arose, denying the eternity of the kingdom of Christ."—*Bishop Pearson on the Creed*

XVII.

"This is the confidence that we have in Him"—

"HE SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER."—

Rev. xi. 15.

THE contemplation of the sublime themes which, in the preceding pages, have occupied our thoughts, would be incomplete, without adverting, however briefly, to the grandest and most glorious Rock-cleft of all—the confidence which the believer enjoys in the anticipation of the reign of the glorified Redeemer in the midst of His triumphant Church, throughout the ages of eternity.

In the preceding views of Christ's character and work, and of the official relation in which He stands to His people, He has been brought before us as "the shadow of a Great Rock *in a weary land.*" During their wilderness travel, when the fierceness of the desert heat, the sirocco-

breath of fiery temptation and trial, is beating on their unsheltered heads, they know the blessedness of repairing to these secure refuges, and of hiding themselves there "till the indignation be overpast." But when "the dry and thirsty land" is ended, and Canaan entered—when the twin foes, Sin and Death, have been finally conquered, and the ransomed multitudes are ushered amid the glories of a sinless, sorrowless, deathless immortality,—is "the Great Rock," then, to become only a memory of the past,—recalled only as a sheltering covert while sojourning among the mists and glooms of the Valley of Tears?

Nay; if we can with reverence use the simile; like that strange mass of rock, the Rock of the Sakrah, which the traveller to Jerusalem who has seen it, can never forget—rising in mysterious impressiveness in the very midst of the old Temple area;—so shall the Rock of Ages remain conspicuous, through everlasting years, in the centre of the glorified Temple of the true City of God: Yes, a Rock, with its sacred clefts and fissures standing in the midst of "the house not made

with hands" — whose walls are salvation and its gates praise! Stripping it of metaphor, Jesus is to reign for ever in the midst of His saints. His humanity will, in the future, be co-eternal with His divinity. Of His mediatorial kingdom and government there is to be no end.

We seem, indeed, to gather from various passages of sacred Scripture, that the regal sway which at present He exercises over His *enemies*, human and Satanic, is, at (the *τελος*) "the end of all things"—the winding up of the present dispensation—to cease. *Now* (adopting the application of the words of the 8th Psalm made by an inspired writer), God hath "put all things under His feet."* To the Seer of Patmos, we have seen Him represented in vision, not only walking in the midst of His Churches (symbolised by seven golden candlesticks), but holding the seven stars in His hands. *Now*, He is exalted not only to be Head of His Church, but Head over all things FOR the Church. As the adorable Guardian of

* Ps. viii. 6.

her blood-bought rights and prerogatives, He sways the sceptre of universal empire in her be-hoof. "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously." * But this portion of His mediatorial sway, "the KINGDOM OF CHRIST *over this world*," is to be surrendered, so soon as the last member of His triumphant host has entered within the walls of the heavenly city, —placed for ever beyond the hostility alike of wicked men and of blaspheming devils.

The limits of His reign are defined alike in Old and New Testament Scripture. Listen to the language of ancient prophecy:—"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, *until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool*." † Or hear the apostolic testimony claiming in Him the fulfilment of these same words:—"He must reign *until He hath put all enemies under His feet*." ‡

* Ps. xcvi. 10.

† Ps. cx. 1.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 25. "His reign will endure, not like that of earthly kings, *when* He shall have put all enemies under His feet, but only *till* He shall have done so."—*Alford in loc.*

“Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up (this part of) the kingdom to God even the Father (viz.), when He shall have put down all (wicked, and impious, and oppressive) rule, and all authority and power.”* Not only so, but when the triumph over His own and His people’s enemies is complete, He makes over this subsidiary administration into the hands of the Father.† The affairs of the universe are henceforth to be conducted as they were previous to the incarnation. Like a mighty river which has finished its course, and which mingles its waters in the everlasting volume and rest of the ocean which gave it birth, that part of the mediatorial sovereignty, which extends beyond the pale of the ingathered and glorified Church, will be merged and absorbed in the sway of God absolute.

* “He would deliver up the kingdom, as the governors of provinces render again or deliver up their commission and authority to the Cæsars who appointed them.”—*Grotius, quoted by Barnes.*

† “Nothing is here said which can affect His co-equality and co-eternity with the Father in the Godhead, which is prior to and independent of His mediatorial work, and is not limited to the mediatorial kingdom.”—*Alford’s Greek Test.*

"And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God" (in the only true Pantheistic sense, rescuing the word from its modern perverted meaning) "may be all in all." *

On the other hand (and this is the aspect of

* 1 Cor. xv. 24-29.

"As His Son, viewed as God, is the Father's equal, so, in the sense in which they are equal, there can be no subordination of the one to the other. The subordination mentioned in the passage under consideration can therefore refer to Him in no other character than that of Mediator."—*Stevenson on the Offices of Christ*, where the views adopted in this chapter are well stated. To the same purpose, *Barnes* remarks, "Whatever part in the administration of the government of the universe He shared as Divine before the Incarnation, He will still share, with the additional glory and honour of having redeemed a world by His death." "The word Father," continues the same commentator, "as applied to God in the Scriptures, is used in two senses—to designate *the* Father, the first person of the Trinity, as distinguished from the Son; and in a broader, wider sense to denote God as sustaining the relation of a Father to His creatures; as the Father of all. . . . It is in this latter sense, perhaps, that the word is used here—not to denote that the Second Person of the Trinity is to surrender all power into the hands of the First, or that He is to cease to exercise dominion and control, but that the power is to be yielded into the hands of God as God, *i.e.*, as the Universal Father—as the Divinity—without being exercised in any peculiar and special manner by the different persons of the God-head, as had been done in the work of Redemption."

the subject which now concerns us), as the Mediator of His glorified Church in heaven, there are to be no limits set to the tenure and exercise of his Kingly and Priestly offices. As it is expressed in the prophetic Psalm, to which we have just alluded, with reference to His royal Priesthood—"Thou art a priest *for ever* after the order of Melchizedek;"* or in the emphatic comments on the same, given in the Epistle to the Hebrews—"Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. . . . Made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. . . . This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. . . . He ever liveth to make intercession. . . . He is consecrated for evermore."† In the most impressive of His own parables, the Redeemer seems to speak as if "the end of the age" were thus to form the true commencement of a limitless reign. For

* Ps. cx. 4.

† Heb. vii. 3, 16, 24, 25, 28.

then it is He calls Himself, for the first time, by the title of "*the King*,"—as He invites His blood-bought subjects to inherit the kingdom He had won.* Similarly, in the parable of 'the Pounds,' when, under the figure of the nobleman "returning from the far country," He is spoken of as "*having received the kingdom*;" so far from abdicating His mediatorial sceptre, "His appearing and His *kingdom*" are spoken of as identical, dating from the hour when He shall judge both the quick and the dead. It is His coronation-day, "the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart."† "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."‡ The title given to Him by the great Apostle, and upon which we have dwelt, as one of the most blessed of the believer's Rock-clefts, will have an eternal meaning and signification—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and *for ever*."§ In that sublime figuration in the Apocalypse, re-

* Matt. xxv. 34.

† Rev. xix. 7.

† Cant. iii. 11.

§ Heb. xiii. 8.

ferred to also in a previous chapter, we behold the glorified Mediator under the emblem of a slain Lamb, with the scars of earthly suffering still visible—the impressive memorials of His anguish and bloody sweat—His cross and passion—adored by a multitude which no man can number—even by “ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands.” Their ascription indicates the duration of His sway:—“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb *for ever and ever.*”^{*} Similarly, in the still sublimer passage and vision of the white-robed and palm-bearing multitude, that same Jesus, in His offices of immutable love—the same adorable Redeemer, under His suffering title, and designation of *the “Lamb”*—is represented, in the midst of the throne, as “feeding them,” and “leading them to the living fountains of waters;” and with the identical hand that was nailed to the cross “wiping away all tears from their eyes;”[†] as if

^{*} Rev. v. 12.

[†] Rev. vii. 17.

Eternity's comment on the precious words of the old prophet, now so familiar to us, "A MAN shall be as . . . the shadow of a great Rock!" At the sounding of the seventh angel, the voices in heaven which proclaimed His final conquest of the world-kingdoms, are heard proclaiming, "He shall reign for ever and ever."* And, not to dwell on other delineations of the future, given in the same inspired record, the sublime closing vision of "the Holy City, New Jerusalem"—with its river, and trees of perennial fruit—at-tests alike the termination of the reign of evil—"the curse,"—and the perpetuity of the reign of Christ—the Author and Dispenser of all "blessing:"—"There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him."†

From these then, and other similar passages in holy Scripture, we gather the exalted truth, that, though the "subsidiary sway of the divine Redeemer over His foes, human and

* Rev. xi. 15.

† Rev. xxii. 3.

angelic," is to be terminated, He is to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever:"—that through the endless years of eternity the Rock of Ages, with its glorious clefts and unscalable heights, is to remain bathed in the sunlight of heaven. His redeemed are still to love Him as Mediator, while they adore Him as God. "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on His head. He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it to Him, even length of days for ever and ever." * "His name shall endure for ever. His name shall be continued as long as (yea, longer than) the sun." † "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." ‡ "If I go to prepare a place for you," was His own gracious declaration, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." §

The perpetuity of that mediatorial office and reign over the Church of the First-born, we may regard in a twofold light. (1.) As the stipulated reward of the Redeemer's sufferings on

* Ps. xxi. 4.

† Ps. xlv. 6.

‡ Ps. lxxii. 17.

§ John xiv. 3.

the part of the Father ;—the fulfilment of glowing words spoken centuries before the Incarnation ;—“ When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”*

(2.) The continuance of His official character and administration, is represented by Christ Himself as the pledge and guarantee for the permanence of His people’s bliss. “ Because I live, ye shall live also.” † Their lives are “ hid with Christ in God.” ‡ They “ shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” § They “ sit with Him upon His throne.” || His presence as Mediator constitutes the divine tenure, by which, as kings and priests they hold their crowns and censers. So that, if we dare use so strong a simile, that Rock of Ages must first crumble in pieces, before they can be denuded of their inviolable bliss—their blood-bought privileges.

* Isaiah liii. 10, 11.

† John xiv. 19.

‡ Col. iii. 4.

§ Rom. v. 17.

|| Rev. iii. 21.

The song of earth will thus be echoed and perpetuated by the Redeemed around the throne—made the never-ceasing anthem of heaven,—“O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to THE ROCK OF OUR SALVATION!”*

Most blessed and elevating thought!—the whole redeemed Church—under the Psalmist’s beautiful emblem of a dove—with its once soiled and ruffled plumage, now “covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold,” flashing back the glorious sunlight;—delighting still, as on earth, to perch in these eternal Rock-clefts;—no longer “hastening its escape from the windy storm and tempest,” but folding its wings in the perfected bliss of everlasting rest and everlasting love! Here the Church is represented as only seeing her Beloved “through the lattice,”—obtaining brief and passing glimpses of Him. Here the Rock of Ages is beheld often through looming mists, or at all events, gleams of sunshine

* Ps. xciv. 1.

alternate with obscuring clouds. Not so in that bright world ! Nothing there to dim, or darken, or blur the vision. "We shall see Him as He is." * In a nobler sense than that of present security, "we shall *abide* under the shadow of the Almighty." † The closing petition of His own sacerdotal prayer will be everlastingly fulfilled: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." ‡ Who can tell but that in the revelation of that glory, it may be with the Church in heaven as with the Church on earth, that the Divine Being can only be discerned *mediately*; that no one (no, not even a glorified saint) can gaze on the unveiled lustres of Deity. The words may hold as true in a world of blessedness as in a valley of tears—"No man can see My face and live." § How then shall the great Jehovah be most appropriately revealed to the eyes of adoring worshippers? Shall it not be through the same divine medium by

* Col. iii. 4.

‡ John xvii. 24.

† Ps. xci. 1.

§ Exod. xxxiii. 20.

which He was unfolded to His Church on earth,—when as *the Christ incarnate* they beheld His glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ;—“ the Image of the Invisible God ? ” Thus revealed as “ the slain Lamb ” with scars and blood-marks ;—thus revealed as “ the smitten Rock ” with its clefts and fissures ;—these will be, to the Church triumphant, everlasting remembrances alike of the vileness of sin, and of the vastness of Jehovah’s love !

In closing these transcendent themes, let the solemn—all-important personal question press itself with ever-renewed and augmented earnestness ; can we (each of us) with some good measure of humble yet triumphant confidence, appropriate Christ as *our* God and Saviour ? Are we able in any feeble degree to make the noble avowal of the great Apostle our own : “ To me to live is Christ ? ” * Are we cherishing, in any

* Phil. i. 21.

humble measure, as our life-long aspiration, that we "may win Christ, and be FOUND in Him."* Found in the Rock-clefts now, are we able to make the challenge of an assured present acceptance and peace—"It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"† Found in the Rock-clefts "in all time of our tribulation," are we able, amid the fragile blessings and fleeting pleasures of earth—to claim a better and more enduring portion, and to say, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the *Rock* of my heart and my portion for ever?"‡ Found in the Rock-clefts "in all time of our wealth;" are we able to disown perishable refuges; and exulting in divine and more enduring confidences, to tell as the secret of true happiness—"In the *Lord* put I my trust, why say ye to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain?"§ Found in the Rock-clefts in the hour of death; while the silver cord is fast loosing, and the golden bowl is in the act of being

* Phil. iii. 8.

† Ps. lxxiii. 26.

† Rom. viii. 33.

§ Ps. xi. 1.

broken; as life, and those whose presence and smile have made life joyous, are fast dimming from sight, shall we be able thus to triumph in Him who alone is "without variableness"—
"The *Lord* liveth, and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted?"
Found in the Rock-clefts on the Day of judgment—shall we be able then, as we look un-
awed on passing heavens, a dissolving earth, and burning worlds, to exclaim—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"* Found in the Rock-clefts through all eternity; under the consciousness of their unassailable security, shall we be able to enter into the Apostle's words, when (conjuring up in his enumeration every possible form of antagonism and evil), among others, he defies "things to come"—the cycles of eternity—ever to separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"

"NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO KEEP
YOU FROM FALLING, AND TO PRESENT YOU

* Rom. viii. 35.

FAULTLESS BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF HIS
GLORY WITH EXCEEDING JOY, TO THE
ONLY WISE GOD OUR SAVIOUR, BE
GLORY AND MAJESTY, DOMINION AND POWER,
BOTH NOW AND EVER." AMEN.

Te Deum Laudamus.

THOU ROCK OF AGES ! swathed in clouds of light,
Whose heights unclimbed, ne'er foot of angel trod :
Ancient of days—Almighty—Infinite !
Older than Nature's eldest-born :—Great God—

We praise, we bless, we magnify Thy name !
And as before the birth of Time wert Thou,
So, through unending ages still the same,
Past, present, future, one eternal Now !

Thou didst descend from everlasting bliss,
In manger born, to raise us up on high ;
A woe-worn Pilgrim in earth's wilderness,
Wedding our finite dust with Deity.

Around Thy path no blazoned banners wave ;
No jewelled diadem Thy brows adorned ;
Thy cradle borrowed, and a borrowed grave ;
Servant of servants, poor, despised, and scorned !

The spotless Lamb is to the slaughter led,
The Son of man and Lord of Glory dies ;
For us ! for us ! He bowed His thorn-wreathed head :
O mystery transcending mysteries !

The mighty triumph is at last complete,
Hell's myriad hosts are vanquished and uncrowned,
Death lays his sceptre at the Victor's feet,
And captive millions rise with chains unbound.

Nor this alone :—He left His Throne of light !
The secret hid from ages past to tell ;

The Revelation of the Infinite,
The Image of the Great Invisible.

A *Father's* love disclosing unto all ;
The poor, the lost, the burdened, the oppressed
Not one excluded from the gracious call—
“ Come unto Me, ye weary, and have rest ! ”

Peace for the guilty, stung with conscious sin ;
Peace for bereav'd ones wailing for their dead ;
Peace amid waves without and storms within,
The troubled soothed, the mourner comforted.

O Saviour God, ascended up on high,
Thou true High Priest within the Temple-veil,
To all that call upon Thee ever nigh,
“ Prince who hast power with God, and must prevail ; ”

Thou who dost reign Thy Church's Lord and Head,
With many crowns upon Thy regal brow,
Thou who shalt come to judge both quick and dead,
Great Rock of Ages ! hide Thy servant now,—

That when archangel's trump is pealing loud,
“ When every mountain shall a Sinai be : ”
When sun and moon shall wear their sackcloth shroud,
Creation in her final agony,—

“ Found ” in Thy clefts, and shielded by Thy might,
From Thy blest love and presence nought may sever ;
Earth's shadows merged in Heaven's unclouded light,
Securely sheltered in THE ROCK, FOR EVER !

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